ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF RURAL TRIBAL WOMEN OF TRIPURA

A CASE STUDY

TAPATI CHAKRAVARTI

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To

My Tribal Sisters of Rural Tripura

FOREWORD

Many studies on tribal affairs of Tripura have already been done by Scholars and researchers. But very limited attempts have been made on tribal women and their economic activities.

In this book an analiytical study has been made by the author Smti. Tapati Chakravarti on the economic participation of tribal men and women, tribal women and non-tribal women, women of different tribes and also women of different socio-economic strata within the same tribal community.

We have the pleasure that Smti. Chakravarti has been awarded Ph. D. Degree for this work which will help the Scholars & researchers for further studies in this aspect as a good reference.

We are thankful to Dr. Tapati Chakravarti.

Dated, Agartala the
20th December, 1997.

M. L. Reang
Director
Tribal Research Institute,
Govt. of Tripura.

FOREWORD

Women's study as a distinct discipiline in the realm of social sciences is of recent origin. The spurt in studies in the socio- economic problems of women has been caused by the growing concern about the phenomenon of gender inequility which is an obstacle to development . The gender dimension of the nagging problem of inequility has also come into limelight because of the shift of social science research from the conventional techno-economic and socio- political approach to human development approach.

The interest in women's role in the society is no longer confined to the feminists or even to philanthropists. It is being increasingly realised by all those believing in growth with equity or even growth with sustainability that better understanding of the complex and multifaceted problem of gender inequality and adoption of measures to deal with it are of great importance.

Like women's study, the study in tribal development is also essentially an exercise in comprehending and combating with the problem of inequility. The tribals as a disdvantaged social group suffer from many crippling problems that retard their development keeping them relatively backward and marginalised in a growing economy, thus paving the path of dissension and social unrest of which the North Eastern States have a bitter experience.

It goes to the credit of Dr. (Ms) Tapati Chakravarti that she has combined women's study with tribal study by selecting "Economic Participation of Rural Tribal Women of Tripura" as the topic of her reserach. A third dimension

of the study in inequlity in the form of regional disparity has been added by the choice of the villages of Tripura, a backward special-category state as the geographical area, to which her investigation relates. Thus the author examines the socio-economic consequences of the members of the target group of her study being women of the disadvantaged tribal societies in the rural environment of a backward state. So, the very selection of the area of investigation makes her study fascinating and important.

It goes without saying that the best way of understanding the status of a social group is to examine the nature and extent of its economic participation. But the author has undoubtedly undertaken a difficult task as the economic participation or work participation of women is a concept bedevilled by definitional controversies which are yet to be resolved satisfactorily. The Human development Report(1995) of the UNDP has discussed the limitations in the conventional measurement of women's work participation. The author has, however, courageously challenged the procedure of the Indian population census in measuring work participation rate of women and has adopted her own definition and way of measurement in order to analyse the economic participation of tribal women in rural Tripura. One may or may not agree with her. But the courage of her conviction and her painstaking efforts to deal with the quantitative and qualitative aspects of economic participation by undertaking participatory surveys in the difficult and risky terrain of Tripura's hills deserve sincere appreciation.

The writer has done well to compare the findings of her survey with the picture portrayed by the Indian population censuses as this helps in understanding the limitations of

the latter. She has also shown the depth of her interest in various contemporary works in women's study by frequently referring to those works and commenting on the similarities and dissimilarities of her findings with those of other scholars and researchers in the related field. This has endowed her essentially regional study with greater generality.

The monograph contains revealing findings and conclusions and useful policy recommendations. The most important finding is the predominant role played by women in the tribal economy of Tripura in great contrast with their comparatively low social status. The author has successfully exploded the myth of comparatively high status of tribal women vis-a-vis their non-tribal counterparts in Tripura.

It is also shown that the process of marginalisation of the poor tribals consequent upon economic transition in Tripura has affected tribal women more adversely than men. From the strictly economic point of view, tribal women suffer more from wage discrimination, lack of occupational mobility, poor entitlement to productive assets, lack of leisure, denial of right to use natural resources etc. In fine, the tribal women's economic entitlement is strikingly low in comparison with their contribution. To remedy this sordid state of affairs, the writer has put forward a number of specific suggestions which the policy makers would do well to pursue.

One welcome feature of the monograph is the lucid style of expression even as it deals with complicated socio-economic issues. This will make it useful and interesting to both social scientists and general readers. The writer

has evinced committed interest in the wellbeing of tribal women and thus she has given a human touch to her otherwise objective and scholarly exercise.

I am sure that the monograph will commend itself to a wide cross-section of readers.

Assam University
Silchar

P.R. Bhattacharjee.
Dean
School of Social Sciences.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The present work is the outcome of findings of years together under the supervision and guidance of my revered teacher Dr. Pravas Ranjan Bhattacharjee Dean, School of Social Sciences, Assam University, Silchar, who introduced me to the sphere of economic participation of rural tribal women of Tripura so long untrodden. It was due to his constant inspiration and insistance I could travel a lot inside the tribal villages of Tripur a to find the truth in tribal women's life.My words fail to express my heartiest gratisude & deep regards to my mentor for this work.

Most humbly I acknowledge my gratefulness to the social scientists whose works have provided me with the materials for this study. Dr. Malabika Dasgupta, Professor, Dept. of A & A Economics, Tripura University, Agartala. Her valuable suggesstios enriched my ideas about the subject. Sri Nagendra Jamatia, Ex-Minister, Govt of Tripura without whose help it would have been difficult to go inside the Jamatia village, Natun Dewanbari; Sri Kumud Kundu Chowdhury, researcher in tribal language, for his assistance in data collection; Sri Anil Das, Senior Lecture, Dept. of Statistics, M.B.B College for helping me in data processing; Srimati Rubi Das for typing this thesis; Sri Guruprasad Chakraborti, Assistant Librarian, Tripura University for helping me in many ways; my colleagues & friends for their encouragement & inspiration to me.

One thing I beg to refer in this connection that to do the field-work in tribal villages on the part of a non-tribal woman was a risky venture because of the insurgency problem in the interior areas of the State. I was seriously in doubt whether it would at all be feasible for me to

complete the field -work braving such odds. But due to the selfless & friendly gestures of some tribal friends my work has been smoothly done here. And in this respect I convey my sincere thanks & heartfelt graditude to my tribal friends, namely, Sri Durbajoy Riang, Ex-TTAADC Member; Sri Hlura Mog, Ex-MLA; Sri Ramendra Narayan Deb Barma, Headmaster, Herma High School; Sri Swapan Riang, my former student; Sri Onshai Mog of village Mahamuni; Sri Guhakbhanu Jamatia of Natun Dewanbari.

I convey my thanks & gratitude to the Dept. of Education, Govt. of Tripura, Authority, M.B.B. College, Agartala, for giving me scope to do part-time research work. The various Govt. & Non-Govt. Agencies; Offices, Libraries, have also made me indebted to them for their generous help in collecting the secondary data available with them.

My gratitude knows no bounds to my husband Dr. Mahadev Chakravarti, Mahatma Gandhi Professor, Dept. of History, Tripura University, for his unflinching help, cooperation & invaluable suggestions to complete this work. My sweet youngs, son & daughter, have encouraged me in my study with their attitude who never complained about missing their mother for her engagement in this work.

My father-in-law Sri Tarakdas Chakraborty- a retired teacher who sacrificed his everything for his institution and pupils - was a constant source of inspiration to me. My brothers-in-law Sri Sambhunath Chakraborty. Headmaster, Bhangamora H.S School, Hooghly, and Sri Sanjoy Chakraborty, Reader, College of Leather Technology, Calcutta and my sister-in-law Smti Subhra

Chakraborty, Asstt. Teacher, J.C. H.S. School, Howrah and my brother Sri Ramajyoti Bhattacharjee, Accounts Officer, C.W.C. Silchar have indebted me to them for their constant help in performing the tiresome jobs relating to this work.

No word is sufficient enough to acknowledge my thanks and gratitude to the authorities of the Tribal Research Institute, Government of Tripura and also to the Tripura Printers and Publishers(Pvt), Ltd, Agaratla, under the dynamic leadership of Sri Gautam Das who took all initiatives to publish this research work at an early date.

Finally, I am deeply indebted to my tribal sisters of the villages of Tripura- to whom I dedicated this book- who gave me free access with open heart to know the problems and sufferings pivoting their economic life, their weal and woe.

Agartala
12 November, 1997.

Tapati chakravarti

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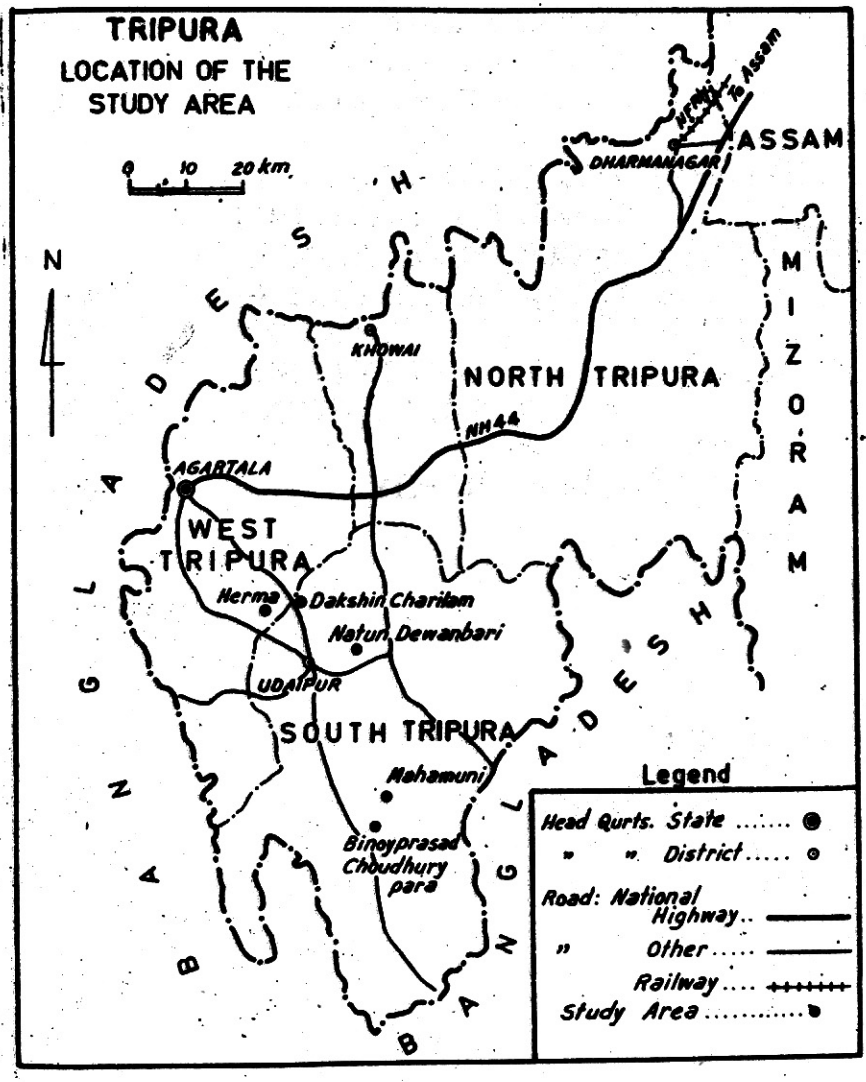
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Legend
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" " District
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" Other
Railway
Study Area

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

There is now a growing awareness throughout the world about the role of women in economic development. In India too, many attempts have been made for highlighting and recognising the contribution of women to the economy of the country.

Women's studies and Tribal studies have been identified as important areas of research in the social sciences by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). Indeed, tribe-specific and gender-specific studies are as important as region specific and area-specific studies if we look at the problems from the angle of human development. This is particularly true of the North-Eastern Region where one must make a distinction between an area and development of its disadvantaged people. In Tripura, some scholars have attempted to do research on tribal studies, but studies on women, particularly tribal women remain unattempted till now. The very absence of an empirical study which deals exclusively with the economic activities of tribal women is indeed a big gap in the social science research in Tripura. Towards bridging this gap a humble attempt has been made by the present researcher to highlight and assess the economic participation of rural tribal women of Tripura.

The tribals of Tripura are overwhelmingly rural people. According to 1991 Census 98.35 per cent of the total tribal population of the State live in rural areas. Census Reports also show that the rate of economic participation of the

tribal women of rural areas is higher than that of the tribal women of urban areas of Tripura. Again, tribal economy of Tripura, although characterized by its relative backwardness is undergoing some changes. Tribal people have been coming out of their traditional jhum economy to participate in a number of works which they did not do before. Keeping these facts in mind, an attempt has been made to study the different aspects of economic participation of rural women in the tribal society of Tripura.

The Conceptual Framework

At the very beginning, let us explain what we mean by economic participation. The activities of women are usually divided into reproductive and productive activities. According to a standard dictionary, reproductive activities are related to the process of producing new individuals of the same species by some form of generation. [1] From the view point of a social scientist, reproductive activities include not only those related to childbirth and childcare but the entire gamut of activities commonly known as household chores. On the other hand, productive activities are related to the process of producing goods. The productive activities may again be divided into activities connected with the process of subsistence production and market-related production. Subsistence production means production of goods of use-value for day -to-day consumption[2] while market-related production implies production of commodities of exchange-value. Our concept of economic activity includes activities related to both subsistence production and market-related production. The concept of economic activity in this study does not include reproductive activities into its fold.

Among the tribal people of Tripura subsistence production like jhuming is still an important source of living and the tribal women constitute a significant part of these subsistence producers. Apart from the field work in jhuming, some activities of tribal women do not fit into any modern categories of work but seem to be remnants of the gathering stage of human development. Gathering is done almost solely by the women in tribal villages. Involvement of women in these subsistence activities like gathering forest products, fuel collection, fishing, etc. are very crucial for the survival of their families. Similarly they also do weaving to meet their family need. Their contribution through a variety of subsistence activities--whether these can be measured or not and however low and high these may be- prevents deteriorartion in the households' level of sustenance. In most situations of a subsistence economy it is far from being supplementary optional or dispensable. On the contrary, it becomes vital and essential in every way . But the subsistence activities mostly done by women are ignored and overlooked by the Census estimation [3]. Our study attempts to capture, as far as possible, these ignored aspects of women's contribution to home and society.

There is a strong view that engagement in household work also implies significant contribution to real income and welfare of the family and the hours spent on household activities should therefore be included in hours of productive work . It is beyond any doubt that women have been making invaluable contribution to welfare of their families almost everywhere at the cost of their labour in household activities. But, if we include household activities in economically productive activities, it may happen that, high rate of work participation may not reflect properly

the opportunities of emlpoyment for tribal women and their extent of participation in the dynamic process of develoment. Again, the hours of work of women in productive activities may not be properly compared with that of men. The difference in participation rates of tribal and non-tribal women in the rural area will also become blurred if we include household activities within the fold of our analysis. Taking these points in view, we have exluded household activities of women from our concept of economic activity.

While defining economic participation we have taken the idea used in 1991 Census which is defined as "Participation in any economically productive activity. Such participation may be physical or mental in nature. Work involves not only actual work but also effective supervision and direction of work. It also includes unpaid work on farm and family enterprise"[4]. But in respect of time we do not accept the notion of the Census authorities as it is vaguely defined. In estimating participation we have taken into account both involvement in economic activities and time spent on these activities. According to our concept, economic participation implies involvement in economic activities for at least one hour per day on an average during the reference period, that is, 365 days preceding the last day of the survey in the selected villages.

The nature and pattern of women's work in subsistence economy and co-existence of wage and non-wage labour make it difficult to measure women's participation in economic activities. Moreover, in an extremely backward economy like the tribal economy of rural Tripura, where people do not have clear concept of time, the amount of error in reporting time may be considerable. In such a

situation, instead of asking the respondents for a precise estimate of time, perhaps it would be better to ask the respondents to give only rough estimates of the proportion of day, week or season spent on work. One of the recent surveys carried out in North India used this approach to estimate the porportion of time spent on the particular activity.[5] We have followed this method with partial modification. We have not given the time spent on each individual item of work because of the fact that it was very difficult to collect. Instead of asking specific time, data were collected in terms of segments of day (some time, half a day, etc.). At the time of analysis numerical values were ascribed to the replies in order to estimate time spent on activities. In this way we have estimated how much time a respondent spent in economic activities approximately in a day. A respondent was marked as worker if he/she apent at least one hour in a day on an average in economic activities. For estimating the extent of economic participation we have used participation rate which denotes proportion of workers to total population.

On the point of economic participation comparisons have been made between tribal men and women, tribal women and non-tribal women, women of dirrerent tribes and also between women of different socio-economic strata within the same tribal community.

Source material

The study is mainly based on the primary data collected through field surveys in four tribal villages and one non-tribal village of Tripura.

The secondary sources are Census data, other official statistics and information collected from various

institutions and organisations, books, journals, reports etc.

Primary and secondary data have played complementary roles in our study for ascertaining facts in a comparatively inaccessible area about people who live mostly in isolation from the rest of the world.

Methodology

In order to examine the quantitative and qualitative aspects of economic participation we have surveyed villages inhabited by selected major tribes of Tripura. This task has been facilitated by the fact that a cluster of tribal houses in the rural area is generally inhabited by the people of the same tribe. The survey work was carried out on four tribal communities, namely, Tripuri, Riang, Jamatia and Mog. For comparative study, one non-tribal village was also taken under investigation.

While conducting the village survey, we have followed the concept of Census village. Therefore, our village means a cluster of households located in a compact area. We have selected representative villages inhabited by major tribes and followed the method of purposive sampling. Once a cluster of households had been selected we made complete enumeration of all the households of that cluster.

Villages were selected on the basis of purposive sampling so that the objectives of our study could be fulfilled. But the method of complete enumeration was followed in respect of the households in selected villages. In our judgment the selected villages are representative of the tribal communities about whom we have carried out research.

We regret that we could not survey a large number of villages not only because of paucity of resource and time but also because of extensive prevalence of extrimist activities in Tripura which have made it almost impossible for the outsiders to have access to village communities in a large part of Tripura. However, even, with the limited area of our survey we are sure that we have been successful in portraying a representative picture of rural tribal women of Tripura engagged in eking out a precarious living for their families.

As noted earlier, the field survey was carried out in four tribal villages and one non-tribal village of Tripura. We have surveyed a Tripuri village, Herma; a Riang village, Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para; a Jamatia village, Natun Dewanbari; a Mog village, Mahamuni; and a non-tribal village, Daksin Charilam. Herma and Daksin Charilam are in West Tripura and Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para, Nutun Dewanbari and Mahamuni are situated in south Tripura. The village share more or less similar techno-economic characteristics of poor rural areas of Tripura.

Primary data collection was done in stages. Repeated visits to the study area and talks, ovservations at the level of the households, and discussion with women respondents, village political leaders and other officials and non-official agencies helped a great deal in understanding the place and the people. This also enabled talking about the objective of this study to arouse people's interest as well as cooperation. Care was taken to include women respondents in all discussions and interviewing. Our field study combined participant observation, interviews with individual women and group discussion on issues common to all women. The response of the tribal women was very

good. The women appreciated that we stayed among them as their guests. So our survey assumed both statistical and participative character at the same time.

We started field work in December, 1991 and completed this work in five villages in different phases in January, 1993.

Economic Contents

The present work constitutes a study in the economic characteristics of a particular disadvantaged group of a backward economy and the problems of development arising out of these characteristics. Both the endogenous and exogenous factors determining economic participation of the rural tribal women have been discussed. In fact throughout the present work our efforts have been to examine the gender dimension of the problems of earning a living in a tribal society.

It is well-known that economic factors do not work in isolation. Rather, they interact with non-economic factors to produce a situation in respect of any society.

Therefore, our work first examines economic implication of the condition of the target group of our study living in a tribal state where non-tribals have become majority through the vicissitudes of history. Secondly, we discuss economics of gender-division in a backward tribal society which imposes disproportionately heavy responsibility on our target gourp (tribal women). The implications of socio-economic transition in the tribal society (for example, participation from jhuming to settled cultivation) on the economic role of women is also examined at the same time. Thirdly, we analyse the limitations imposed by the rural

economic environment on the work opportunities of tribal women and consequent lack of economic mobility amongst them.

As the economic reality faced by the rural tribal women of Tripura gets unfolded in course of our inquiries, we cannot overlook their policy implications. A set of policy recommendations thus naturally emanate from our study.

Division of Chapters

The thesis consists of seven chapters. The first chapter (the present one) deals with the objective, definition and methodology. The second chapter gives an introduction to demographic and socio-economic profile of the tribes of Tripura as the background of our study. The third chapter divides economic participation of tribal women as portrayed by the Census data. The fourth chapter contains the result of the main part of the study which deals with quantitative aspects of economic participation of tribal women as revealed from the field study. The fifth chapter deals with qualitative aspects of economic participation based on field study. The sixth chapter examines the social position of rural tribal women in their society as revealed from the field survey. In the seventh chapter an attempt is made to draw conclusions from our study and make policy recommendations.

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Appendix to Chapter I

The Villages

The villages where the field survey has been carried out, although contain the similar socio-economic charecteristics of rural Tripura, they differ in some respects regarding the mode of cultivation, infrastructural facilities and other amenities avaliable in the villages.

Herma

Herma is a village under Rangmala Gaon Panchayet about 46 Km. from state capital Agartala and 22 Km. from Block Head-quarter Bishalgarh in West Tripura District. From the bus stop a brick -soled road runs to the village. The main village has 50 households. All the households belong to the Tripuri community. In Janauary, 1992 the total population was 241 persons, consisting of 126 males and 115 females.

The village Herma has two schools-one primary and one high school. The Primary Health Centre is 3 km. away from Herma. There runs electricity in the village but only a few better-off households can avail of this facility. The village has got also a pacca-shaded bazar.

Though there are a few tube-wells sponsored by the TTAADC, the lean stream which flows through the village may be treated as the main source of water to the villagers.

Jhum is no longer practised in the village and settled cultivation is the only form of cultivation here. The village is deprived of irrigation facilities. For cultivation of land, the villagers are to depend on the indigenous method of irrigation in a peculiar way of penetrating bamboos in the earth as required to have the overflow of water of the unedergrround.

Unlike other tribal villages there are a considerable number of households having service holders in Govt. offices and schools.

Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para

The picturesue Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para under the Kalsi Gaon Panchayet is inhabited by the Riangs. It is far from the madding crowds, ignoble strife.The nature has gifted the village in beauty with her all she has. It is in South Tripura District under Bogafa Block Head-Quarters which is 18km. away from this village. The village is 15km. away from the bus-stop Baikhora which is the nearest one. There is a brick-soled road from Lakshichera which is 3 km. away from Baikhora upto the entrance of the village. To go to Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para one has to get on a three-wheeler Auto service from

Baikhora upto Lakshichera & from Lakshichera one has to walk a mud-road towards the village. On the way towards the village one has to cross the rivulet Turmachhara. It is needless to say that jeep is quite inaccessible to the village, where walking along the narrow strips of Kachcha road is a must.

The village has 38 households out of which 33 are the Riang one & the rest belong to the Tripuri Community. Of course, the Tripuri households of this hamlet are excluded from our field survey. In Janauary, 1992, the total Riang population in the village was 192 persons, consisting of 98 males & 94 females. The village is under the jurisdiction of TTAADC.

There are one Anganwadi Centre & one Junior Basic School in the village. It has no Primary Health Centre, no electricity. As regards the water facility natural streams are the only source of water for all purposes.

Agriculture is the only occupation for all the households. Jhum cultivation is practised either as principal or as subsidiary occupation by the villagers. They practise jhum in the hillocks & wet cultivation in 'lunga' areas comprising narrow strips of low land in between hillocks. Among the Riang households 13 are found jhumia ones, exclusively. Occupation other than agriculture is almost absent for the households of this Riang village.

Natun Dewanbari

Natun Dewanabri is another village where we have to go for field survey. It is at the foot of Dakshin Baramura Hill and 17 km. away from Matabari Block Head-quarter in South Tripura District. The very village is under the

South Baramura Gaon Panchayet of TTAADC. Pitra bazar is by the side of the river Pitra. We have to cross it to go to the said village through a brick -soled road which runs from Pitra ends and at the gate-way of the village. We have to follow a narrow path often merged with the edges of paddy fieilds and tracks of lands to go to the village. There are 50 households in the village out of which 42 are of Jamatia Community and the rest are of the Malsums- a sub-tribe of the Halams. It is to be noted that the Malsum households are not included in the purview of our investigation. In January, 1992, the total Jamatia population of the village Natun Dewanbari was 233 of which 123 males and 110 females.

The only tributary Dewanchhara flows through the village and the Jamatias live on the both sides of the rivulet. As regards water facility, the villagers do not have clean drinking water as the ring-well and three tube-wells once provided by the TTAADC are found out of order at the time of our survey there, for want of repairing. As a result the villagers have to depend on the Dewanchhara for their own purpose and also for their cattle. The villagers cannot think of medical treatment in the village as medical facilities are almost non-existent there. The village has a Primary School and a Senior Basic one. Although electricity exists in the village, only a few households can afford it.

The Jamatias are mainly settled cultivators. Some of the households retain jhuming as their subsidiary occupation. Irrigation facilities for wet cultivation has not yet reached the village. Very few households are having members, who are engaged in other than agricultural occupation.

Mahamuni

In our field survey we have come across Mahamuni a small village under Santirbazar Gaon Panchyet, about 5 km. from Bogafa, the Block Head-quarter in South Tripura District, which is inhabited by the Mog community. As regards communication there is a brick -soled road which goes from Santirbazar to the village. In January 1992 the total Mog population in the village was 183 out of which were 101 males and 82 females. The number of Mog households in the village is 29.

This village is developed a bit compared to other villages under our survey. There is electricity in the village and the same thing like other villages is noticed to us i.e. a very few households are able to use electricity. Mahamuni has the facility for supply-water. As regards its education and health , the village can get the facility of Primary School, Higher Secondary School and Primary Health Centre which are in Santirbazar.

Mahamuni is on the west bank of Laugong, the small river which makes the village fertile. The village is on the plain land and only settled cultivation is practised by the Mog people. For wet cultivation minor irrigation has been extended to the village by the Block Development Office. Cultivation is the main occupation for most of the villagers of Mahamuni and very few people the the village are engaged in occupation other than agriculture.

Daksin Charilam Madhyapara

Daksin Charilam Madhyapara is a non-tribal village under Bishalgarh Block in West Tripura. The village is about 40 km. from Agartala and 20 km, from Block Head-quarter. The main village has 40 non-tribal households. In January, 1992 the total population was 241 persons,

consisting of 137 males and 104 females. The village is under Daksin Charilam Panchayet.

Daksin Charilam Madhyapara has one primary School. The village has been electrified. Agriculture is not the main occupation to the people of this village and irrigation facilities are not available there.

The following tables show the distribution of land and income among the households of four tribal villages & non-tribal village under our study.

Table-1
Land Distribution in Tribal and Non-tribal villages Under Study

Village and Tribal/ Non-tribal groups	Herma Tripuri	Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para Riang	Natun Dewanbari Jamatia	Mahamuni Mog	Daksin Charilam Madhyapara Non-tribal
Size land-holdings (in Kani)	No.of h.holds	No.of.h.holds	No.of.h.holds	No. of h.holds	No.of h.holds
0-2.5	22	13	16	15	32
2.5-5	11	3	5	5	6
5-10	15	12	14	6	2
10-15	2	4	5	1	--
15+	Nil	1	2	2	--
Total	50	33	42	29	40

*note : 2.50 Kani= 1 acre approx.
Source : Field Survey.

Table-2
Income Distribution in Tribal and Non-tribal villages Under Study

Village and Tribal/ Non-tribal groups	Herma Tripuri	Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para Riang	Natun Dewanbari Jamatia	Mahamuni Mog	Daksin Charilam Madhyapara Non-tribal
Income (in Rupees)	No.of h.holds	No.of.h.holds	No.of.h.holds	No. of h.holds	No.of h.holds
1,000.00-5,000.00	6	6	16	12	10
5,000.00-10,000.00	10	20	17	13	10
10,000.00-20,000.00	10	7	4	Nil	6
20,000.00-50,000.00	20	Nil	5	3	10
50,000.00+	4	Nil	Nil	Nil	4
Total	50	33	42	29	40

*note : Income is estimated on the basis of 1990-91 price-level.

CHAPTER II

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE TRIBES OF TRIPURA

Political History, Area and Location

Until 14 October, 1949, Tripura was a Princely State and thereafter it was integrated with the Indian Union as a Part 'C' State under direct administrative control of the Government of India. It was decleared a full-fledged State on 21 January, 1972. The State is sorrounded by Bangladesh almost on all sides except an outlet by the north-eastern side through Karimganj District of Assam. It is situated between 22°56' N and 24°32' N latitudes and 91°21' E longitudes. Tripura is one of the seven states of the North-Eastern Region of India adjoining Assam and Mizoram towards north-east and east. The total area of the State is 10,486 km^2 according to survey of India with a total population 27,44,827 persons as per 1991 census. The State has been divided into four district, viz, West Tripura, North Tripura, South Tripura and Dhalai district.

Physical Features

Tripura's topography is characterised by hills and plains. The proportional distribution of land between hills and plains is said to be 2:1.There are six major hill ranges covered by evergreen and deciduous forests. Being in a high rainfall area, the hills contain valuable timber like sal, jarul etc, but mostly they are covered with bamboos and canes. There are nine rivers in Tripura which have all the characteristics of hill streams.

The people and The Changing Demography

The State of Tripura is the permanent abode of a number of scheduled tribes besides a large population of the non-tribals. According to the order of the President of India in 1956 on the scheduled castes and tribes in Tripura, there are nineteen scheduled tribes in the State.[1]

The following are these nineteen scheduled tribes living in Tripura:

1. Bhil	2. Bhutia	3.Chaimal	4. Chakma
5. Garo	6. Halam	7. Jamatia	8. Khasi
9. Kuki	10. Lepcha	11. Lushai	12. Mog
13.Munda	14. Noatia	15. Oraon	16. Riang
17. Santal	18. Tripuri	19. Uchai	

Out of these 19 different scheduled tribes, Tripuri, Noatia, Halam, Jamatia, Chaimal and Uchai are local tribes of Tripura[2]. Mog, Chakma and Kuki tribes settled afterwards. All the indigenous tribes are Indo-Mongoloids. Excepting the Garos and Khasis the rest of non-indigenous tribes came to Tripura as tea garden labourers from Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh and ultimately many of them settled down here [3]. The Garos and Khasis belonging to Indo-Mongoloid racial origin came from the neighbouring State of Meghalaya in the recent past.

The break-up of the tribal population into individual tribes is given in Table-II.1.

From the table it is evident that the Tripuris constitute the largest tribal group followed by the Riangs in Tripura. The former rulers of Tripura emerged from this largest tribal group i.e, Tripuri.

Table -II .1

Demographic Composition of Tribal Groups in Tripura in 1961, 1971 and 1981

Sl. No.	Tribes	1961	Percentage to totalTribal Population	1971	Percentage to total Tribal Population	1981	Percentage to total Tribal Population
1.	Tripuri	1,89,799	52.72	2,50,545	55.60	3.30.872	56.66
2.	Riang	56,597	15.72	64,722	14.36	84,004	14.4
3.	Jamatia	24,359	6.76	34,192	7.6	44,501	7.62
4.	Chakma	22,386	6.22	28,622	6.36	34, 797	5.96
5.	Halam	16,298	4.52	19,076	4.23	28,970	4.96
6.	Mog	10,524	2.92	13,273	2.94	18,230	3.12
7.	Notia	16,010	4.45	10,297	2.28	7,182	1.22
8.	Bhail	70	0.02	169	0.04	838	0.14
9.	Bhutia	7	--	3	--	22	--
10.	Garo	5,484	1.52	5,559	1.23	7,298	1.24
11.	Khasi	349	0.1	491	0.11	457	0.03
12.	Kuki	5531	1.53	7,775	1.72	5,502	0.94
13.	Lepcha	7	--	14	0.04	106	0.01
14.	Lushai	2988	0.83	3,672	0.81	3, 734	0.63
15.	Munda	4409	1.22	5,347	1.19	7,993	1.38
16.	Oraon	2875	0.8	3,428	0.76	5,217	0.9
17.	Santal	1562	0.43	2,222	0.5	2,726	0.47
18.	Chaimal	50	0.01	--	--	18	--
19.	Uchai	766	0.22	1061	0.23	1,306	0.22
	Unspecified	--	--	38	0.01	--	--
	Total	3,60,070	100.00	4.50,544	100.00	5,83,920	100.00

* Note : Tribe-wise population for 1991 is not yet published.

Source: Census of India, Tripura, 1961, 1971 and 1981.

Tripura had been mainly a tribal region even in the recent past when the tribal population predominated ; but with the passing of time and growing cultural contact with the neighbouring areas, population of non-tribal people steadily increased. Large-scale immigration of land-hungry cultivators from the neighbouring districts of British Bengal e.g. Sylhet, Tipperah, Noakhali, Chittagong and Mymensingh started since the last part of the century. This swelled the number of non-tribal people who outnumbered the population of the tribal people. Before August, 1947, this inflow was a pure case of economically motivated immigration and was largely limited to the cultivating class. But after August, 1947 displaced persons from erstwhile East Pakistan came in large number and changed the demographic profile of Tripura. The dramatic demographic shift turned a predominantly tribal state into a predominantly non-tribal one within a span of a few decades. In 1931 the total tribal population of Tripura was 52 percent of the total population of the State whereas in 1981 it came down to 28.44 percent. However, there has been an increase in the proportion of tribal population which is about 31 percent according to 1991 Census. Tripura is the only State in India where continuous migration from neighbouring Bangladesh have totally upset the local demographic balance and reduced its original tribal inhabitants to a pitiful minority in their own land.

How the non-tribals have outnumbered the tribal population in the State over the preceding decades is shown in Table -II.2

Table- II.2 shows the growth of population in Tripura and percentage of decadal variation in population. It

shows that the growth rate of population in Tripura has maintained more or less a steady increasing trend since the beginning of this century. But in the decade of merger of Tripura with the Indian Union the population registered an abnormally high growth rate of 78.71 percent as reflected in 1961 Census.

If we compare the expansion in population in Tripura with that of all -India, it is found that the expansion in population in the State is abnormal. A comparative picture of decadal growth rates of population of Tripura and India (as a whole) is shown in Table-II.3

Table -II.3 reveals that in each successive decades falling within the period 1931-91the figures for decadal growth rate of population in Tripura is far ahead of the corresponding all-India decadal growth rate. The figures for 1951-61 record an abnormal differenece of 57.2 percent in growth rate. This unnatural growth rate of population in Tripura in comparison with that of the whole country is not due to the natural demographic factors like fertility, mortality etc. It is largely due to the great influx of refugees, to the State in the early years of independence.

The waves of migration described above caused demographic imbalance in the State. Table-II.4 gives an account of this fact of history.

It is evident from Table-II.4 that decadal growth rate of the non-tribal population has always been higher except for the decade, 1911-21. From the study of the table it would appear that there was a sort of demographi balance between the tribals and the non-tribals in the State till 1931. The balance was lost in 1941 due to inflow of people from outside Tripura.

Density of Population

The hills, forest and swamps, which mainly comprise the geographical area of the State, may not appear very attractive for the settlers to come from outside. But paradoxically, among the hilly States of North-East India, it has the highest density of population to-day, as indicated in the table II.5, owing to a steady flow of immigrants into the Sate over a long period of time.

The density of population per sq.km. indicates the pressure on land. Undoubtedly the settlement of immigrants has intensified the pressure on land in the absence of any significant growth of industries. The pressure on land combined with the effects of transfer of land both legally and illegally, partition and forced sale to money-lenders, has resulted in the fragmentation of land[4]. Unrestricted transfer of land from tribals to non-tribal displaced persons in early days turned the tribals landless[5]. The problem of land alienation among the tribals of Tripura is commonly viewed as the leading cause of tension between the tribals and non-tribals in the State. While it is true that tribal land in Tripura has been alienated mainly to better-off non-tribals, the exploitation of poor tribals by well-to-do tribals through appropriation of land is also there [6]. In this respect, Tripura seems to share the experience of some other states of India which have a considerable tribal population[7].

Rural -Urban Distribution of Population

It is necessary to classify the population into rural and urban, since it helps in assessing the differential in the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the population. Residence in rural or urban area is accepted as

a basic information for stratification in socio-economic and demographic studies, because this is a variable on which many of the characteristics depend.

Due to rapid urbanisation, the Indian society faced remarkable changes in the past few decades. In Tripura there is also steady rise in urban population. According to 1991 Census, 15.30 percent of the total population of the State live in urban areas. On the other hand 84.70 percent of the total population of the State live in rural areas spreading over about 842 villages (revenue). Overall increasing growth rate of urban populations in Tripura can be noted from Table -II.7

The tribals of Tripura are overwhelmingly rural people even today. In Tripura the towns with their out-growth are located in the plains and are inhabited by non-tribal people at large. Table -II.8 shows the proportion of rural and urban tribal population since 1951.

It appears from Table-II.8 that the percentage of urban tribal population is microscopic although it has been increasing slowly. What is more noteworthy is that tribal population in the capital town of Agartala itself is 79.6 per cent of the total urban tribal population. This is because of the fact that Agartala was also the capital of the State during the rule of the *Maharajas* who belonged to the Tripuri community and his relatives, nobles and officers belonging mainly to the same tribe settled here and their descendants constitute a good proportion of the city's population. This means that the remaining 20.43 per cent of urban tribal population are spread over the thirteen sub-divisional headquarters and census towns. The process of urbanisation is, therefore, limited to the non-tribal

people mainly in this Sate[8]. Tribal people never had any significant share of the urban population. If urbanisation is accepted as an indicator of development, one can conclude that the process of economic development in Tripura has strengthened only relative position of non-tribals vis-a-vis tribals.

Sex Ratio

One of the basic demographic characteristics of a population is the sex composition. The sex ratio, defined as the number of females per thousand males, is used as an index to measure the sex composition in India.

Table -II.9 shows that in India, sex ratio has had a declining trend since 1911 (modest exception being provided by the decades, 1941-51 and 1971-81). On the other hand Tripura's sex ratio betrays an increasing trend (with the exception of the decades 1911-21 and 1921-31, when the ratio remained constant.)

The lower sex ratio in Tripura in the earlier decades is a reflection of the immigration of the male population to the State leaving females at home. In the later decades, when refugee influx occurred, both men and women came to this Sate for permanent settlement.

Sex ratio of tribal and non-tribal population and rural and urban tribal population can be seen in Table-II.10. and Table-II. 11.

In Tripura, the number of females per one thousand males among the non-tribals is less than that among the tribals.

Socio-Economic Profile of the Tribal People

A comparison of sex ratio between rural and urban tribal population shows that, in urban areas of Tripura the number of tribal females per one thousand tribal males is less than that in rural areas. The reason behind such difference is that the working tribal males in urban areas do not always bring their families due to various problems like housing, high cost of living etc. This may be one of the causes of very slow unbanisation of tribal population.

In the past, jhuming was universally practised in Tripura[9]. Tribal people produced everything they consumed. [10]. Writing in 1869, Lewin, the then Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Hill Tracts, had shown that a jhumia family could comfortably meet their needs from its jhum and had enough surplus left over for festival and religious ceremonies, sickness, ornaments and clothes [11]. He estimated that a man and his wife could jhum 9 kanis (3.6 acres) of land every year [12]. Production included cultivation of crops, collection of forest products, production of textiles, weaving of baskets, making other crafts, fishing and hunting. They did not produce for exchange but for consumption only. But among the crops produced by them, cotton and seasamum were commercially important crops. These attracted the businessmen who induced the jhumias to produce surplus of cotton and seasamum to exchange for salt, tools, metal-wares and other necessaries [13]. This account of the tribals of Chittagong Hill Tract can, *mutatis mutandis*, be easily regarded as that of the tribals of Tripura as the two territories are contiguous and their tribals have always had very similar socio-economic characteristics.

Therefore, the tribals, though virtually on the subsistence level, could not be said to be worse off than their counterparts in the plains on the average. By the turn of the century there was no significant gap in the living condition of the tribals in the hills and the settled cultivators in the plains [14].

From about the middle of the last century plough cultivation was gradually introduced[15]. More land was reclaimed and brought under settled cultivation. Large-scale influx of people into Tripura took place. At that time administrative changes that were being introduced paved the way for the immigration of settlers and thus brought the tribals in contact with the Bengalees to an appreciable extent during this period. The peasant immigrants from Bengal, in acquiring land, entered deep into the interior parts of the State. Acquiring of lands by them did not, in the beginning, affect the economic interests of the tribals. For they were not aware of the value of cultivable low lands as a productive private property. Plough cultivation was unknown to the majority of the tribal people.

But, as the immigrants were making inroads into the interior, total area available for jhuming was also falling. This was the most adverse direct effect of large scale immigration upon the economy of the tribals. Until the beginning of the third decade of the present century the Maharajas of Tripura did not undertake any definite measure for the settlement of the jhumia tribals in land. Nor did they take any step for the protection of the interests of the tribals against the onslaught of the market economy.

However, the first attempt at settling the jhumias in land and inducing them to take to plough cultivation was taken in 1930-31. In that year an area of 70,400 acres in

Khowai Sub-division called the Kalyanpur Reserve was set apart as reserved for the settlement of jhumias. Subsequently the total area reserved for the jhumias was raised to 1,248,000 acres in 1941.

Besides the creation of jhumia settlement reserve the then king of Tripura followed a general policy of urging the jhumias to adopt settled plough cultivation. The influence of their contact with the immigrant plough cultivators was already there. And the combined effect of these changes was the growth of a class of Incipient Sedentary Farmers who were taking to the plough without wholly giving up the practice of shifting cultivation.

According to the 1931 Census Report the principal occupation of 18,876 persons was jhuming and the number of their supporting dependents was 32,025 [16]. Some of jhumias had subsidiary occupations like plough cultivation -- both as tenant and owner cultivator- and working as agricultural labourer. Similarly many plough cultivators' subsidiary occupation was jhuming. Thus jhumias were turning to ploughing slowly and getting acquainted with the ownership of land and its economic use. But at the same time they found themselves exposed to the risk and temptations of a money economy.

The strongest impact of partition of India on Tripura was exerted through the influx of refugees. It has been noted earlier that influx continued over a long period of time and it was also big enough to alter the demography of Tripura in a revolutionary manner. The refugee influx meant not only addition to number of persons but it also altered substantially the ethnic composition of Tripura's population which resulted in drastic changes in occupational distribution and rural-urban distribution of

population and also the resource-use pattern. Refugee influx has made the process of socio-economic adjustment of the tribals very difficult. The interaction between the economies of the hills and plains assumed a new character as the hills were now exposed to direct socio-economic "aggression" from the plains because of the fact that the immigrants now started settling deep into the interiors which the tribals had regarded as their exclusive reserves[17]. Moreover, the progress of the tribal society towards settled cultivation that started in the early decades of the present century was retarded by the rehabilitation of the refugees in land- based occupations. The resulting discontent of the tribals has given rise to political turmoil and even waves of violence from time to time and problems of poverty of the rural tribals remain unsolved even today.

The trend since 1951 has been one of growing landlessness among the tribals. This has been the result of extension of reserved forest area, imposition of restrictions on tribal rights on community lands and transfer of land by the tribals to non-tribals through various legal and illegal means [18]. As a result, the proportion of tribal population owning land as well as the proportion of total area owned by tribals have fallen over the period from 1951 to 1981. Development of settled agriculture was achieved mainly through extensive cultivation accompanied with immigration. As settled economy grew larger and larger, the marginalisation process of the tribal economy and tribal-nontribal socio-economic dualism were accentuated creating a host of problems of adjustment.

The relevant data available from 1951 Census indicate that at the beginning of the plan period, the relative status of the tribal people in respect of ownership of land was

much superior to that of the non-tribals. Table-II.12 shows a comparison of the landowning population of tribal and non -tribal societies in Tripura.

From Table-II.12 it is evident that, in 1951 the relative status of the tribal people was superior to that of non-tribal people in respect of ownership of land.

In 1981, it is found that non-tribals have the larger proportion of operational holdings and total operated area compared to the tribals which is shown in Table -II.13.

When we turn from the more strictly demographic to the social attributes of a population, it cannot be denied that occupational status assumes a place of permanent importance. The classification of workers by occupation and industry provides an important indicator for any comparative analysis of the stage of economic development reached by different societies, as well as index of economic differences within a State.

Now, for a comparative analysis of the development of tribals and non-tribals of the State, occupational structure of the groups and their change over the period is shown in Table -II.14.

A comparison of occupational pattern obtaining in 1961 with that obtained in 1991 for the tribals and non-tribals in Tripura yields a picture of occupational immobility or very insignificant mobility for the tribals. Agricultural sector is still the predominant sector of living for the tribal people of the State. But the marked increase in the proportion of agricultural labourers accompanied with the decrease in the proportion of cultivators suggests that, under the growing pressure of population and because of

alienation of land, more and more tribal people are eking out their livelihood as landless agricutural labourers. According to an estimate, there were approximately 42,060 jhumia and landless tribal families in the State in 1972 [19]. According to other official estimates, more than 16,000 jhumia families were awaiting rehabilitation at the end of the Sixth Plan Period and 3962 families were rehabilitted in the years 1993 and 1994 [20].

Employment opportunity in the secondary sector is least for the tribals and it has not improved over the decades for them while it is not negligible for the non-tribals. After thirty years since 1961, even in the 'other services' sector, the relative disadvantage of the backward tribals persists. In respect of 'other services' which includes employment in government and other establishments, it is revealed that social mobility of tribal people is so restricted that only 2.5 per cent of the tribal workers are engaged in this category. On the other hand, the relevant proportion is as high as 16.78 per cent in the case of non-tribals.

While Table-II.15 gives a hopeful picture of increasing social mobility in respect of registered employment there is a dark side too in the representation of tribal people in government services. Like the indigenous people elsewhere, the tribals in Tripura are grossly underrepresented in pestigious and higher salaried jobs of the Government. The representation of the tribal people in government services as compared to others in December 1982 will support this contention (Table-II.15).

Table-II.16 reveals that except in class IV posts, the representation of scheduled tribes in other categories of

posts is very low in comparison with the no. of posts held by others. Since grade IV posts are comparatively low-paid jobs, this also gives rise to systematic income differences resulting in unequal opportunities for advancement. The position as revealed in December 1982, might have improved as indicated in Table-II.15, but even then the fact remains that inspite of welfare measures and reservations etc., the future outlook is far from bright. There is also uneven distribution of opportunities among the tribal communities themeselves. The Tripuris and some other Christianised tribal people are availing of the opportunities reserved for Scheduled Tribe by virtue of their influence and advantageous position in the field of education. As a result very few opportunities for employment in government services are shared by the people belonging to other tribal communities because they are largely unemployable owing to low level of education and skill.

In the initial period of planning the government was overwhelmingly concerned about rehabilitating the refugees by giving them lands, jobs, education, health and other facilities while the tribals were almost left to themeselves. As a result, the non-tribals in Tripura, especially the persons coming for settlement in this State, had a head start ahead of the tribals in enjoying the gains from development. Their advanced socio-economic background also contributed to their more rapid advancement vis-a-vis the tribals. The participation of the tribals in the development process remained peripheral because of the socio-cultural backwardness and also because of the fact that it became difficult to offer viable alternative to jhuming as flat land became scarce. In recent years, answer to the problem of economic utilisation of the hills and hillocks of Tripura has been sought to be

found in forest plantation, rubber-plantation, orchards, animal husbandry etc. But in all these endeavours, the rehabilitated tribals are virtually being transformed into agricultural labourers or the schemes are meeting with failures owing to desertion of settlement colonies by the beneficiaries. The tribal ethos of collective existence has also suffered owing to the growth of nuclear families with a view to availing of the benefits extended to the tribal jhumias[23].

Later, goals of development and programme of modernisation were somewhat redefined so as to provide educational and other facilities for the tribals through preferential State patronage. It of course, took quite some years before meaningful change could be brought about the situation anew by State intervention in favour of the scheduled tribes. Over the decades some rise in the educational attainments and capabilities of this group has taken shape.

It is heartening to note that growth in literacy among the tribals has been taking place during the plan period in Tripura which is shown by the following table (Table-II.17).

Table-II.17 shows that during the period 1961 to 1991 literacy rate has been rising for both tribal and general people of the State.

Redressing Measures

With increasing literacy levels tribal people have been attainign higher levels of productive capacity and becoming aware of their rights and privileges. From their awareness comes the urge for organised assertion of statutory rights. This development has been in action in countervailing the forces of disparities in the distribution of gains accruing from planned development of the State among the social

groups. Diversified employment opportunities for the tribal people particularly in rural areas through various programmes like Food for Work, National Rural Employment Programme and the State Rural Employment Programme, are provided by the State Government. Both Central and State Governments are now very particular about scrupulously adhering to the system of hundred-point roaster in filling up vacancies.

With the rest of the country Tripura has also been implementing tribal sub-plans meant for the benefit of the tribal people. Moreover, the Integrated Rural Development Programme for providing the rural households with income-earning assets has been in operation since the Sixth-Plan. There are special concessions and relatively favourable terms and conditions regarding subsidy and loan components of the programme in respect of the scheduled tribe households.

In 1985, the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council under sixth schedule of Indian Constitution was constituted which comprises 68.1 per cent of the total area and 30.5 per cent of the total population including 76.38 per cent of the total tribal population of the State[25]. Within the area of the TTAADC transfer of land is strictly controlled by that authority which is authorised to enact laws with respect to the allotment and use of land other than under reserved forests, regulation of shifting cultivation, inheritance of property, etc. Therefore, the prospects of stopping alienation of tribal lands are quite bright now.

There is no denying the fact that some legal and socio-economic measures have been taken in the State to guarantee the rights and interest of the tribal people and to develop the tribal areas. But inspite of that the net result of all the measures cannot be said as satisfactory as

it is desired. Overwhelming majority of the rural people are still below the poverty line. According to a statement of the Dept. of Rural Development, Government of Tripura, 73.58 per cent of the total rural famalies of the State are living below the poverty line as in November, 1993 (up to Rs. 11,000.00 (1991-92 price-level) per annum) [26]. It indicates that the fruits of the development plans and programmes, meant for the poorest and weakest section of the society, have not reached them properly. As a result, the process of development of the rural people, particularly, the tribals has been extremely slow.

Table -II .2

Tripura's Demographic Change : 1874-1991

Year	Total Population	Percentage Variation	Tribal Population	Percentage of Tribal to total Population
1874-75	74,242	--	47,523	64
1881	95,639	28.82	49,915	52.19
1891	1,37,575	43.85	70,292	51.09
1901	1,73,325	25.99	91,679	52.89
1911	2,29,613	32.48	1,11,303	48.47
1921	3,04,347	32.59	1,71,610	56.37
1931	3,82,450	25.63	2.03,327	52.00
1941	5,13,010	34.14	2,56,991	50.09
1951	6,39,028	24.56	2,37,953	37.23
1961	11,42,005	78.71	3,60,070	31.50
1971	15,56,342	36.28	4,50,544	28.95
1981	20,53,058	31.92	5,83,920	28.44
1991	27,44,827	34.30	8,53,345	30.95

Source : W.W Hunter,p.484;
S Deb Barma, Census Bibarani 1931;
Census of India 1991, Series -1, paper -2 of 1992,
Final Population Totals :
A Brief Analysis of Primary Census Abstract, pp.98-100.

Table -II .3

Decadal Population Growth Rate of Tripura in Comparison with that of India 1931-1991

Year	All India decadal growth (percentge)	Tripura decadal growth (percentage)
1931-41	14.22	34.14
1941-51	13.31	24.56
1951-61	21.51	78.71
1961-71	24.80	36.28
1971-81	24.66	31.92
1981-91	23.85	34.30

Source : Census of India 1991, Series -1, paper -2 of 1992. Final Population Totals : A brief Analysis of Primary Census Abstract, pp. 98-100.

Table -II .4

Growth of Tribal and Non-tribal Population in Tripura

Year	Population	Tribal Population	Non-tribal Population	Tribal Growth	Non-tribal Growth
1911	2,29,613	1,11,303	1,18, 310	17.63	44.90
1921	3,04,437	1,71,610	1,32,827	54.18	12.27
1931	3,82,450	2,03,327	1,79,123	18.48	34.85
1941	5,13,010	2.56,991	2,56,019	26.39	42.92
1951	6,39,028	2,37,953	4,01,075	(-)7.40	59.26
1961	11,42,005	3,60,070	7;81,935	51.31	91.76
1971	15,56,342	4,50,544	11,05,798	25.12	41.41
1981	20,53,058	5,83,920	14,69,138	29.60	32.85
1991	27,44,827	8,53,345	18,91,482	46.14	28.74

Source : Census Reports of India; S. Deb Barma, Census Bibarani.

Table -II.5

Density of Population Since 1901, Tripura

Year	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
Density Per sq.km.	17	22	29	36	49	61	109	148	196	263

Source :Census Reports of India .

Table -II .6

Density of Population in Selected States, 1981 and 1991

States	Density per sq.km. 1981	1991
Tripura	196	263
Manipur	64	82
Meghalaya	60	79
Nagaland	47	73
Mizoram	23	33
Arunachal Pradesh	8	10

Source : Census of India , 1991, Series-1, Part-2 of 1992, pp.82-85

Table -- II.7

Growth Rate of Urban Population in Tripura

Year	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
Percentage of Urban Population to total Population	2.5	3.4	6.7	9.0	10.43	10.93	15.30

Source : Census Reports

Table -II .8

Distribution of Tribal Population into Rural and Urban in 1951,1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991, Tripura

Year	Total Population	Rural Population	Urban Population	P.C. of Rural to Total	P.C. of Urban to Total
1951	2,37,953	2,36,436	1,517	99.36	0.64
1961	3,60,070	3,56,372	3,698	98.97	1.03
1971	4,50,544	4,45,059	5,485	98.78	1.22
1981	5,83,920	5,76,252	7,668	98.68	1.32
1991	8,53,345	8,39,264	14,081	98.35	1.65

Source : Various Census Reports.

Table -II.9

Sex Ratio in India and Tripura

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
India	972	964	955	950	945	946	941	930	935	927
Tripura	874	885	885	885	886	904	932	943	948	946

Source : Census of India, Series -1, Paper-2 of 1992 and Census of India, Series -24, Paper -1 of 1991.

Table - II.10

Sex Ratio of Tribal and Non-tribal Population in Tripura for selected years

	Year			
	1961	1971	1981	1991
Tribal	955	954	962	965
Non-Tribal	920	938	940	935

Source : Census Reports 1961,1971, 1981 , 1991.

Table - II.11

Sex Ratio of Rural and Urban Tribal Population in 1961,1971, 1981 and 1991, Tripura

	Year			
	1961	1971	1981	1991
Rural	956	955	964	967
Urban	843	857	852	881

Source : Census Reports 1961,1971, 1981 , 1991.

Table -II.12

Proportion of Population Owning Land to Total Population Dependent on Agriculture, 1951

Social Group	Total population dependent on agriculture	Population owning land	Percentage
Scheduled tribe	1,80,701	1,65,622	91.65
Non-tribal	3,00,140	2,28,435	76,11

Source : Census Report, 1951.

Table II.13

Tribal and Non-tribal Distribution of Operational Holdings

Paticulars about holding	Tribal	Non-tribal	Total of all categories
Total number of operational holding	94,809 (30.8)	2,12, 923 (69.2)	-3,07,732 (100.00)
Total operated area	1,22,781 (37.2)	2,07,316 (62.8)	3,30,097 (100.00)

Source : State Report on Agriculture Census 1980-81

Table-II.14

Occupation Pattern of Tribal and Non-Tribal people in 1961 and 1991, Tripura

Occupation	Tribal		Non-tribal	
	1961	1991	1961	1991
Cultivators	86.2	75.36	48.03	44.14
Agricultural labourers	4.43	20.14	9.81	19.88
Mining...allied activities	1.16	1.23	4.0	2.7
Livestock,....allied activities				
Household industry	5.24	1.12	6.13	2.02
Other than household industry	0.26	0.28	4.11	3.02
Conctruction	0.05	0.03	1.6	1.06
Trade and Commerce	0.23	0.18	7.19	8.34
Transport and Communication	0.08	0.15	1.83	2.06
Other Services	2.35	2.5	17.3	16.78
Total Workers	100.00	100.00	100.00	

* Mining, quarrying .....allied activities and Livestock .... allied activities are clubbed together.

Source: Census Reports, 1961 and 1991.

Table -II.15

Year -wise New Employment of Tribal and Non-tribal Persons in Government Services in Tripura

Year	No. of Persons Employed			Percentage of Tribal employment to total employment (registered)	Percentage of Non -tribal employment to total employment (registered)
	Tribal	Non-tribal	Total		
1982	854	2,474	3,330	25.6	74.4
1983	814	2,468	3,282	24.8	75.2
1984	987	2,324	3,311	29.80	70.20
1985	1,161	2,468	3,629	31.9	68.1

Source : S.R. Bhattacharjee [21].

Table -II.16

Representation of S.T. in Government Services as Compared to Others in Tripura as in December, 1982*

Sl. No.	Category of Posts	No. of Posts available	Total No. of posts filled up	Percentage of posts held by ST	Percentage of posts held by others
1.	Class I	547	450	3.33	96.67
2.	Class II	2,644	2,023	7.46	92.54
3.	Class III	51,255	43,661	17.13	82.87
4.	Class IV	15,217	13,430	20.56	79.44

Source : S. R Bhattacharjee[22].

Table -II.17

Growth of Literacy Among the Tribals

Year	Literacy among scheduled tribes	General literacy in the State
1961	10.01	20.24
1971	15.03	30.98
1981	23.07	42.12
1991	32.25	60.39

*Note : In1991 Census all Children below age 7 years have been treated as illiterate. In 1961, 1971 and 1981 Censuses, all Children below 5 years were treated as illiterates 24.

Source : Census Reports 1961, 1971 and 1991 (Provisional).

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CHAPTER III

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF TRIPURA'S TRIBAL WOMEN : THE PICTURE PORTRAYED BY CENSUS DATA

In the present chapter we have attempted to analyse the economic participation of tribal women of Tripura on the basis of Census data. The main objective of the present chapter is to examine the economic participation of tribal women of Tripura in terms of its level, extent and structure which may give a broad idea about the changes in this respect over the past few decades. Also it is due to the fact that the time series analysis on macro-aspects cannot be done without using Census data. It is our endeavour to collect data for the Census years from 1961 to 1991. But as tribe -wise variation in work participation is not yet available for 1991, the analysis in this respect excludes the last Census.

Accurate and reliable statistics are very important for any group in a given population for analysing trends and for evolving policies. One of the basic sources of statistics is the decinnial Census. But considerable doubts have been expressed over the accuracy and completeness of the Census data regarding women's economic participation.[1] This is because of the fact that women perform both housework and productive work simultaneously or intermittently and hence these two portions are inseperable. In such a situation it is difficult for the enumerator to assess the level and extent of productive work performed by women. The classification of domestic chores and the 'invisibility' of women's work always give underestimated figures for the economically active female

population[2]. Secondly, most of the rural women perform tasks on their own farms and also help in a part of the process that leads to production of the final output. The successive Censuses till 1981 failed to bring out the contribution of these unpaid family workers, particularly in the non-wage, non-monetised subsistence sector[3]. This occurred not only in cultivation and agricultural labour but also in wide range of traditional non-wage subsistence occupation. What is more, even the respondent is not able to perceive that she has made a contribution to productive work. Quite often the women respondent is not even in direct communication with the enumerator. The male member of the household is likely to answer on her behalf. Hence, when question relating to women's work status and their availability for work are asked, the answer tends to reflect a male perspective. In a cultural setting where women's involvement in other than domestic work is considered unprestigious, this leads to an under-enumeration of women's work and of her availability for such work, especially outside the home[4]. Further, women's economic activities could be seen by the men as an extension of their housework and so reported. Last but not least, frequent changes in definitions and concepts of 'work' in the Census, in an attempt to obtain a better enumeration of workers, particularly female, have made comparability across the different time points rather difficult. These changes are found to affect the enumeration of female workers much more than male workers[5]. It is because of these limitations in our data system we do not have accurate and reliable statistics on economic participation in the case of women.

Concept of 'work' in the Census

However, we have analysed economic participation of tribal women of Tripura by using data on work participation rate on the basis of the Census as it provides quantitative information on economic participation in macro aspects. Work participation rate denotes the proportion of workers (economically active population) in the total population. The cencept of 'work' was similar in all the three Censuses of 1961, 1971 and 1981 implying participation in economically productive activity of physical or mental nature including supervision and direction of work[6]. In the 1991 Census the concept of work includes unpaid work on farm or in family enterprises [7]. Although the concept of work is stable since 1961 except a slight modification in 1991, changes in reference period and other factors introduced distortions which make comparability difficult.

The data on economic activity of the people collected up to the 1951 Census were based on income and dependency concepts. From the 1961 Census onwords the concept of work measured in terms of time or the labour force concept has been followed. This is in accordance with the recommendations of the ILO and generally followed in most of the countries. The classification of population as workers and non-workers based on the concept of work was introduced in the 1961 Census. In the case of seasonal work a person was considered as a worker if he/she had some regular work of more than one hour a day throughout the greater part of the 'working season'. In the case of regular employment the basis of work was satisfied if the person was employed during any of the fifteen days preceding the day on which the enumerator had visited the house-hold [8].

In the 1971 Census the population was divided into two broad streams as 'workers' and 'non-workers' on the basis of main activity[9]. The reference period adopted was one week prior to the data of enumeration in the case of regular work. In the case of seasonal workers, a person's main activity was ascertained with reference to such work in the last one year even if the person was not economically active in the week prior to the date of enumeration.

The dichotomy of workers and non-workers of 1961 and 1971 Censuses was discarded in the 1981 Census and instead a trichotomy of main workers, marginal workers and non-workers was adopted [10]. For main workers the time criterion of engagement in work for major part of the year, that is, at least 183 days was adopted while those who worked for sometime during the last year but not for the major part were treated as marginal workers. Those who had never worked during the last year were non-workers. A uniform reference period of one year preceding the enumeration was adopted for recording activity status in the 1981 Census, irrespective of whether the activity was seasonal or regular. The trichotomy of main workers, marginal workers and non-workers partially permits a comparability of 1981 Census economic data with that of 1971 as well as 1961. The main workers of 1981 Census can be expected to correspond to the workers of 1971 amd the main workers and marginal workers of 1981 together to correspond to the workers of 1961 [11].

In the 1991 Census the long reference period of one year for both seasonal and regular activities and the trichotomy of main workers, marginal workers and non-workers are adopted as was in the 1981 Census. But in view of some valuable suggestions made by United Nations Develoment

Fund for Women and Women's Organisations with regard to capture women's unpaid work or family farm and family enterprise certain modifications are made in the concept of 'work' [12] which we have pointed out earlier. Here also the problem of comparability of the 1991 Census data on work-force with that of the preceding ones still exists. This is because of the fact that, unpaid workers on family farm and family enterprise, mostly women, are included in the category of workers for the first time. The increase in the work participation rate, if any, is to be viewed in the light of the modification made in the concept of 'work' in the 1991 Census.

In the light of the above definition and concepts of 'work' made by the Censuses of India we have analysed the work participation rate of the tribal women of Tripura from different angles. Table -III.1 shows the proportion of workers to total tribal population of Tripura.

Workers Among the Tribal People

From Table -III.1 it appears that in Tripura, 35.79 per cent of the total tribal population are workers according to the 1991 Census. The table clearly indicates a decline in the proportion of workers to total population from 51.58 per cent to 37.79 percent during the period 1961 to 1991 and this decline is drastic in 1971. The heavy fall in number of total workers among the tribals is partly due to the exclusion of women from the category of worker which can be attributed to the definitional change in the concept of 'work' in the 1971 Census. This we hope to analyse in the latter portion of the chapter. What is important to note in this table is the overall deteriorating employment situtation for the tribal people of Tripira. It may also be

observed that against the overall decline in the porportion of rural workers, there has been some marginal improvement in the proportion of workers among the urban tribals of Tripura and it has not declined even in 1971. Although the proportion of workers to rural tribal people has slightly increased from 31.64 per cent to 36.24 per cent between the period 1971 and 1981 (only main workers of 1981 are comparable with workers of 1971), it has again decreased to 32.24 per cent in 1991 even after the inclusion of unpaid workers on family farm and family enterprise in the work-force. The declining trend in the proportion of workers to total tribal population of rural Tripura indicates that tribal welfare measures are yet to take rural tribal people into its fold. On the other hand an increase in the proportion of workers to total urban tribal population reflects an urban bias in tribal welfare measures in Tripura.

Share of Men and Women in the Total Tribal Working Population

The fact which emanates from Table-III.2 is that the share of employment for the tribal females in the total tribal employed people of Tripura is much less than that of tribal males. In all the Census years except 1961, the differenece between the proportions of male workers and female workers is wide and it is wider among the tribal workers in urban Tripura. The Census estimation of male proportion and female proportion of workers to tribal workers raises grave doubts about the correctness of the data; in particular the small proportion of tribal women worker in the rural tribal society seems improbabale. It may also be observed in the table that the proportion of female marginal workers to total marginal workers among

the tribal people is as high as 84.86 per cent in 1981 and 90.1 per cent in 1991. It seems that patriarchal bias is reflected in the estimation of the rural tribal female workers and they are included at best as 'marginal workers' in the Censuses. However, the increasing trend in the share of employment for both rural and urban tribal female workers is observed since 1981, although it is the males' share which has been dominating the work-force in Tripura's tribal society as in other social groups in the State.

Table -III.1

Percentage of Workers to Total Tribal Population in 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991, Tripura

Year	Total	Rural	Urban
1961	51.58	51.90	21.28
1971	31.54	31.64	23.63
1981(Main)	36.14	36.24	28.78
1981(Main + Marginal)	41.24	41.40	29.18
1991 (Main)	32.25	32.24	32.83
1991 (Main+ Marginal)	35.79	35.84	32.97

Note : Census volume on workers for 1991 is not yet published officially.

Source : Census of India 1961, Vol XXVI, Tripura, Part III and Part V-A, pp.208-209
Census of India 1971, Series 20 Tripura, Part IIC(i) and Part V-A, pp.82-87.
Census of India 1981, Series - 21 Tripura, Part -IX, pp.382-399;
State/District Primary Census Abstract 1991 (Provisional).

Table -III.2

Percentage ofTribal Male Workers and Female Workers to Total Tribal Workers in 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991, Tripura.

	Total		Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1961	54.30	45.7	54.15	45.85	88.44	11.56
1971	85.22	14.78	85.20	14.80	86.79	13.21
1981(Main)	74.19	25.81	74.10	25.90	82.60	17.4
1991(Main)	71.36	28.64	71.27	28.73	76.81	23.19
*1981(Marginal)	15.14	84.86	15.06	84.94	90.32	9.68
*1991(Marginal)	9.9	90.1	9.88	90.12	25.0	75.0

Note: Marginal workers of 1981 and 1991 are shown as percentage of male marginal workers and female marginal workers to total marginal workers among the tribal people.

Source : Census of India 1961, Vol XXVI, Tripura, Part III and Part V-A, pp.208-209

Census of India 1971, Series 20 Tripura, Part IIC(i) and Part V-A, pp.82-87.

Census of India 1981, Series - 21 Tripira, Part -IX, pp.382-399;

State/District Primary Census Abstract of 1991 (Provisional), Tripura

Work Participation Rate of Tribal Men and Women

Table-III.3 shows the work participation rate of tribal men and women of Tripura in 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991.

In our society the perpetual cencept of women's work is that women are less economically active than that of men. According to the Census data this concept holds true for

the tribal women of Tripura also. Table -III.3 shows that the work participation rate of tribal women is lower vis-a-vis that of tribal men in all the Census years. Another fact that emanates from the table is that the work participation rates of both tribal male and tribal female have declined between the Census years 1961 and 1991 for total and rural populations while there have been some marginal improvements in the participation rates of tribal male and female for urban area during the same period. The declining trend in women's work participation is not only seen for Tripura's tribal women. Gadgil was among the first scholars in the 1920s to draw attentation to a markedly declining secular trend in the participation of Indian women in economic activities[13]. Mitra also demonstrated in his Census report for 1951 how dramatic this decline was beteen 1901 and 1951 in West Bengal [14]. Report of the Committee on *The Status of Women* in India also states the declining trend in the participation of Indian Women between 1921 and 1971[15].

The thing which astounds us in the table is the steep fall in the participation rate of rural tribal women from 48.67 per cent in 1961 to 9.58 per cent in 1971 whereas for the tribal male the corresponding figures remain very similar during the same period.It is difficult to believe such drastic decline in the participation rate in the case of rural tribal women even if it is assumed that this decline was due to the definitional change in the concept of 'work'. Perhaps, the social definition of women as housewives, reflected in the definition of workers in the Census of 1971 [16],has led to underenumeration of tribal women workers of Tripura. This doubt of underenumeration arises due to the fact that, in the tribal society of Tripura as well as India women are almost as important in the work-force as

men[17] and it is evident from Table-III. 3, that the work participation rate of tribal women is not very much lower than that of their men in the 1961 Census. Somendra Chandra Deb Barma(1933) expressed doubt about the Imperial Table-10 where number of workers assisting jhum cultivation in Tripura [18]. The drastic fall in the work participation rate of tribal women of Tripura was attributed by J.B.Ganguli (1985) party to the transition of tribal economy from shifting cultivation to settled cultivation in which the scope of participation of women was less.[19]. But in a letter study (1993) Ganguli admits that even in the post-jhuming stage tribal women have been actively involved in productive activities and they have not become economically dependent on men[20]. Our field study on selected tribes of Tripura also suggests that an able-bodied woman of a tribal household in a v illage cannot but participate in productive activities although there are some exceptions.

Even if we do not take 1971 into consideration, the work participation rates of rural tribal women of Tripura in the 1981 Census and 1991 Census are 19.12 per cent and 18.84 per cent respectively for main workers. If we include marginal workers the corresponding figures are 26.06 per cent and 25.45 per cent, It is a matter of surprise that even after the inclusion of unpaid workers on family farm and family enterprise in 1991 the participation rate of rural tribal women has declined between the period 1981 and 1991. Decline in the participation rate is more pronounced in tne case of rural tribal men, from 54.27 per cent in 1981 to 45.89 per cent in 1991. On the contrary, an increasing long-term trend in work participation rates of both tribal males and females in urban areas during the period between 1961 and 1991 may be observed. This indicates

that the tribal welfare programme taken over the decades is not pro-rural, rather pro-urban in Tripura and job opportunities, particularly for females are limited in rural area.

Table -III.3

Percentage of Workers to Total Tribal male and Total Tribal Female Populations in 1961,1971, 1981 and 1991, Tripura.

Year	Total		Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1961	54.76	48.26	54.98	48.67	34.69	5.38
1971	52.54	9.55	52.72	9.58	38.05	6.75
1981(Main)	52.62	19.02	52.74	19.12	44.02	10.88
1981(Main+ Marginal)	54.13	27.86	54.27	28.06	44.69	10.96
1991(Main)	45.23	18.81	45.19	18.84	47.44	16.25
1991(Main+ Marginal)	45.93	25.32	45.89	25.45	47.5	16.47

Source : Census of India 1961, Vol XXVI, Tripura, Part III and Part V-A, pp.208-209.
Census of India 1971, Series 20 Tripura, Part IIC(i) and Part V-A, pp.82-87.
Census of India 1981, Series - 21 Tripira, Part -IX, pp.382-399;
State/District Primary Census Abstract of 1991 (Provisional), Tripura

Table -III.4 shows that male-female difference in the participation rates is higher among the non-tribals than that among the tribals in Tripura. Non-tribal population means total population minus total tribal population. The table indicates that in the tribal society the number of working women may be less than that of men but in this

respect they are better off than their counterparts in the non-tribal society of the State among which women are economically more dependent on men.

Table-III.5 shows male-female difference in the participation rates among the tribal groups of Tripura. According to the Census data it is to be noted that there is no tribe in Tripura among whom compared to the males proportionately larger number of females are found in active economic life.

Table - III.6 represents the work participation rates of tribal men and women of North-Eastern States specially and of India as a whole. It is found that male and female participation rates are almost equal in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland. According to the Census data female participation rates are much lower than those of their male counterparts among the tribals of Meghalaya, Mizoram and particularly of Assam and Tripura. Participation rate of tribal women of India as a whole is also much below that of tribal men of India. From Table-III.6 it may be observed that in the case of males, involvement in economic activities is almost similar in all the North-Eastern States including India. But coming over to the females, whereas only a small proportion of tribal females of Tripura are in active economic life, in other North-Eastern States except Assam, it is quite high. It is interesting to note that more tribal females than tribal males were involved in active economic life in Manipur and Nagaland in 1961, but since 1971female participation rates in these two States also have fallen below male participation rates following the pattern observed in other North-Eastern Sates and in India as a whole.

Table -III.4

Proportion (Percentage) of Workers among General Males and Females, Tribal Males and Females and Non-tribal Males and Females in 1961,1971, 1981 and 1991 in Tripura.

Year	General (Tribal + Non-Tribal)		Tribal		Non-Tribal	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1961	54.47	20.91	54.76	48.26	54.33	8.08
1971	49.42	4.83	52.53	9.55	48.17	2.89
1981(Main)	49.23	8.94	52.61	19.02	47.9	4.89
1981(Main+ Marginal)	50.71	12.77	54.13	27.85	49.36	6.71
1991(Main)	47.0	10.14	45.23	18.81	47.76	6.19
1991(Main+ Marginal)	47.56	13.76	45.92	25.32	47.81	8.5

Source : Census of India 1961, Vol XXVI, Tripura, Part I and Census of India 1961,Vol XXVI, Part III and V-A;
Census of India 1971, Series 20 Tripura, Part I-A and Census of India, Series 20 Tripura, Part IIC(i) & Part V-A;
Census of India 1981, Series - 21 Tripura, Part II-B and Census of India 1981, Series 21 Tripura, Part-IX;
State/District Primary Census Abstract of 1991 (Provisional), Tripura.

Note : Non-tribal population means total (general) population minus total tribal population.

Table -III.5

Proportion (Percentage) of Workers among Male and Female Populations of different Tribal Groups in 1961,1971 and 1981, Tripura.

	1961		1971		1981(Main)		1981 (Main+ Marginal)	
Tribe	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
All tribes	54.76	48.26	52.53	9.55	52.61	19.02	54.13	27.85
Tripuri	52.88	46.34	50.73	7.46	51.24	17.64	52.96	26.74
Riang	58.62	53.67	57.82	15.33	56.94	20.45	57.78	30.88
Jamatia	54.18	49.25	51.85	9.00	51.33	25.06	52.12	31.42
Chakma	54.66	50.19	53.20	9.59	52.69	13.82	53.54	20.64
Halam	56.5	51.83	54.07	11.30	54.55	23.41	56.27	30.15
Mog	57.66	47.61	55.02	8.28	54.59	15.27	56.56	26.68
Remaining 13 tribes together	56.62	43.17	53.8	13.31	53.78	24.13	56.00	32.37

Source : Census of India 1961, Vol XXVI, Tripura;
Census of India 1971, Series 20 Tripura, PartII C(i) and Part V-A;
Census of India 1981, Series - 21 Tripura, Part -IX.

Note : Tribe-wise working population for 1991 is not yet available.

Table -III.6

Proportion (Percentage) of Workers among Tribal Males and Females in 1961,1971, 1981 and 1991, India and North -Eastern States

	India		Arunachal Pradesh		Assam		Manipur		Meghalaya		Mizoram		Nagaland		Tripura	
Year	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1961	53.98	48.63	-	-	53.98	48.63	48.33	52.12	-	-	-	-	58.13	59.71	54.76	48.26
1971	55.87	20.75	58.14	55.89	46.72	9.47	45.31	41.29	51.35	39.32	-	-	50.72	47.74	52.53	9.55
1981(Main)	56.66	28.18	52.85	47.95	N.A	N.A.	48.68	47.03	52.08	37.84	46.44	32.89	47.61	46.71	52.62	19.02
1981(Main + Marginal)	58.13	41.33	54.17	52.72	N.A	N.A.	49.17	48.66	53.03	42.02	48.77	38.36	48.34	47.44	54.13	27.86
1991(Main)	53.72	29.99	47.36	42.49	47.15	19.90	46.51	43.18	48.05	33.80	46.52	34.39	50.84	39.60	45.23	18.81
1991(Main + Marginal)	54.74	43.71	47.6	44.09	48.29	33.83	47.32	45.97	48.62	37.77	51.07	43.98	51.01	40.14	45.93	25.31

Source : Census of India, 1961,1971, 1981 and 1991, Special Tables on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

*Note: Up to 1961 Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram were not emerged as independent States or Union Territories in the Census and Mizoram emerged as Union Territory in the Census in 1972.
* 1981 Census was not conducted in Assam.

Work Participation Rate of Tribal and Non-tribal Women

From Table -III.7 it is evident that the economic participation of tribal women is much higher than that of their non-tribal counterparts in Tripura. More than a century back Hunter pointed out the non-involvement of Bengali women in agricultural activities outside the home[21]. Till today it is found that the level of participation rate of non-tribal women is lower vis-a-vis that of tribal women. May be it is the social norms of non-tribal culture which restrict the possibility of field labour [22] for non-tribal women in rural areas of Tripura where agriculture provides the main source of employment of rural people. On the other hand, ethnic norms of tribal society do not minimise the importance of manual labour of women. But an interesting phenomenon emerges when we observe the participation rates of tribal and non-tribal women of urban areas of Tripura. In urban areas it is found that the difference in participation rates between two groups of women is not as much as in rural areas. Cultural difference has been narrowed down in the involvement in economic activities in the urban society which is dominated by service sector.

Another feature which emanates from the Census data is that, although tribal women's economic participation is greater than that of non-tribal women, the former's work participation rate has declined between 1961 and 1991. On the contrary, non-tribal women's participation rate has increased during the same period. This suggests that the scope for work has been increasing for the non-tribal women as a result of economic development while it has remained extremely limited for the tribal women of Tripura.

Table -III.8 shows that, tribal women's involvement in active economic life is higher than that of non-tribal women of the State. It is thus found that compared to the general female population, the tribal females are involved in active economic life to a larger extent. It is evident from the table that since 1971 there has been an increasing trend in work participation rate of non-tribal females of Tripura while tribal women's work participation rate has declined between the period 1981 and 1991 although it has increased between the period 1971 and 1981. The female work participation rate has increased in most of the States during 1981-91 due to the improvements in canvassing in the 1991 Census[23]. In Tripura also the same pattern is observed for general females, but a reverse pattern is observed if tribal women of the State are considered separately.

Work Participation Rate of Women Among Different Tribal Groups

As noted earlier, the tribe-wise participation rate is not yet available for 1991 and our analysis in this respect excludes the last Census year. In Table-III.9 participation rates are given for six major tribal groups (out of nineteen tribal communities of Tripura) separately and the remaining thirteen tribes, numerically insignificant, are clubbed together for this purpose.

An examination of the table reveals that, for total and rural populations both in the 1961 and 1971 Censuses the Riang women had the highest participation rate followed by the Halams. In the 1981 Census the Jamatia women ranked first in work participation rate followed by the Riangs and the Halams.

It is observed that, work participation rate has increased only for two major tribes, Tripuris and Riangs, in urban areas during the period between 1961 and 1981. Among the Halams female participation is nil in urban areas during the same period. Actually it is found that the extent of urbanisation of the tribal population of Tripura with an exception to the Tripuris, is still insignificant. Women workers among the Riangs appeared for the first time in urban areas in the 1981 Census. Women among remaining thirteen tribes have also managed to increase their participation as workers from 0.31 per cent in 1961 to 17.31 per cent in 1981 in urban Tripura.

Table -III.10 presents the tribe-wise distribution of tribal female workers of Tripura in percentage terms. According to the Census data on work participation rate in 1961, 1971 and 1981, the prime position in respect of the proportion of total tribal female workers is occupied by the Tripuri women followed by the Riangs. The smallest share goes to the Mog women. The Chakma women who ranked fourth in the share of the female tribal working force in 1961 and 1971 slipped to the fifth position in 1981. On the other hand, the Halam women moved up in this respect from the fifth position in 1961 and 1971 to the fourth in 1981. For most of the selected major tribes of Tripura the ranking in respect of the proportion of the total tribal female working force did not change except for the Chakmas and Halams between the years 1961 and 1981.

The table shows that the share in the total tribal female working force had been increasing for the Tripuris, Jamatias and Halams while it had been dcreasing for the Riang, Chakma and Mog women. The women of the remaining thirteen tribes managed to increase their share

in total tribal female working force between the period 1961 and 1971, but it again came down in 1981.

The tribe-wise distribution of the total tribal female workers were in parity with tribe-wise distribution of tribal female population (shown in Table -III.11) in all the Census years except for Chakmas and Halams in 1981.

Table -III.7

Proportion (Percentage) of Workers amongTribal Females and Non-Tribal Females in 1961,1971, 1981 and 1991 in Tripura: Rural-Urban Comparative Scenario

Year	Total		Tribal		Urban	
	Tribal	Non-Tribal	Total	Non-Tribal	Total	Non-Tribal
1961	48..26	8.80	48.67	8.45	5.38	5.58
1971	9.55	2.89	9.58	2.48	6.75	5.39
1981(Main)	19.02	4.89	19.12	4.38	10.88	7.32
1981(Main+ Marginal)	27.86	6.71	28.06	6.37	10.96	7.81
1991(Main)	18.18	6.19	18.84	5.57	16.25	8.43
1991(Main+ Marginal)	25.32	8.5	25.45	8.35	16.47	9.03

Source : Census of India 1961, Vol XXVI, Tripura, Part I and Vol. XXVI, Part II and V-A;
Census of India 1971, Series 20 Tripura, Part I-A and Series 20 Tripura, Part IIC(i) & Part V-A;
Census of India 1981, Series - 21 Tripura, Part II-B and Series 21 , Part-IX;
State/District Primary Census Abstract of 1991 (Provisional), Tripura.

Table -III.8

Proportion (Percentage) of Workers among General Females, Tribal Females and Non-Tribal Females in 1961,1971, 1981 and 1991, Tripura

Year	General	Tribal	Non-Tribal
1961	20.91	48.26	8.08
1971	4..83	9.55	2.89
1981(Main)	8.94	19.02	4.89
1981(Main+ Marginal)	12.77	27.85	6.71
1991(Main)	10.14	18.81	6.19
1991(Main+ Marginal)	13.76	25.32	8. 5

Source : Census of India 1961, Vol XXVI, Tripura, Part I and Vol. XXVI, Part II and V-A;

Census of India 1971, Series 20 Tripura, Part I-A and Series 20 Tripura, Part IIC(i) & Part V-A;

Census of India 1981, Series - 21 Tripura, Part II-B and Series 21 , Part-IX;

State/District Primary Census Abstract of 1991 (Provisional), Tripura.

Table -III.10

Proportion of Different Tribal Groups among Tribal Female Workers in 1961, 1971 and 1981, Tripura (Rural+Urban) (For main workers only)

	1961	1971	1981
Total Tribal Female workers	100.00	100.00	100.00
Tripuri	50.73	43.47	52.77
Riang	17.47	22.84	15.41
Jamatia	7.06	7.24	9.78
Chakma	6.36	6.22	4.27
Halam	4.81	4.96	6.15
Mog	2.85	2.53	2.48
Remaining 13 tribes together	10.72	12.74	9.14

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Source : Census of India 1961, Vol XXVI, Tripura, Part III and V-A;
Census of India 1971, Series 20 Tripura, Part IIC(i) & Part V-A;
Census of India 1981, Series - 21 Tripura, Part-IX;
State/District Primary Census Abstract of 1991 (Provisional), Tripura.

Table -III.11

Tribe-wise composition of Tribal Female Population to Total Tribal Female Population in 1961, 1971 and 1981, Tripura

	1961	1971	1981
Total Tribal Female Population	100.00	100.00	100.00
Tripuri	52. 8	55.64	56.77
Riang	15.70	14.20	14.33
Jamatia	6.32	7.68	7.73
Chakma	6.11	6.19	5.9
Halam	4.48	4.19	5
Mog	2.89	2.92	3.08
Remaining thirteen tribes together	11.7	9.18	7.19

Source : Census of India 1961, Vol XXVI, Tripura, Part III and V-A; Census of India 1971, Series 20 Tripura, Part IIC(i) & Part V-A; Census of India 1981, Series - 21 Tripura, Part-IX; State/District Primary Census Abstract of 1991 (Provisional), Tripura.

Work Participation Rate of Tribal Women of North-Eastern States

From Table -III.12 it appears that the tribal women of all the North-Eastern States, except Tripura and to some extent Assam, are proportionately more involved in active economic life compared to the tribal women of India as a whole.

The tribal female work participation rate as depicted in Table-III.12 was highest in Nagaland and lowest in Tripura in 1961. Both in 1971 and 1981 Arunachal Pradesh topped the list in this respect. It is noteworthy that Arunachal Pradesh had a significant proportion of tribal female workers even in the 1971 Census which was marked by low female participation rate throughout India. The work participation rate was highest in Manipur in 1991 while in the same year it was lowest in Tripura followed by Assam.

In most of the North-Eastern States, except Mizoram, the tribal female participation has declined during the period from 1981 to 1991 inspite of special efforts to enumerate female workers in a better manner in the 1991 Census although slight improvement is observed for the tribal women of India as a whole. The sharpest decline in the participation rate of tribal women was in Arunachal Pradesh where the rate declined by 8.63 percentage points from 52.72 per cent in 1981 to 44.09 per cent in 1991. Among the North-Eastern states it is only in Mizoram where economic participation of tribal women has increased during the decade 1981-1991. The abrupt fall in the work participation rate of tribal women of North-Eastern States certainly demands closer scrutiny.

Table -III.12

Percentage of workers to Total Tribal Female Populations in 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991 in India and North-Eastern States.

India/ States/ U.Territory	1961 (Main)	1971 (Main+	1981 (Main)	1981 (Main+) Marginal	1991 (Main0	1991 (Main+) Marginal)
India	48.63	20.75	28.18	41.33	29.99	43.71
Arunachal Pradesh	--	55.89	47.95	52.72	42.49	44.09
Assam	48.63	9.47	--	--	19.90	33.83
Manipur	52.12	41.29	47.03	48.66	43.18	45.97
Meghalaya	--	39.32	37.84	42.02	33.80	37.77
Mizoram	--	--	32.89	38.36	34.39	43.98
Nagaland	59.71	47.74	46.71	47.44	39.60	40.14
Tripura	48.26	9.55	19.02	27.86	18.81	25.31

Source : Census of India 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991, special Tables on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Occupational Pattern of Tribal Women of Tripura

For a better understanding of tribal women's contribution to economic activities, it is necessary to examine the distribution of workers in differnt occupations. The structure of economic activities is expected to shift away from agriculture towards manufacturing industry and services with economic development. Analysis of Census figures on occupational pattern of tribal women of Tripura has not indicated any such shift until recently. Table-III.13 and table-III.14 on the following pages show

that agriculture is still the predominant activity for the tribal women of Tripura. The distribution of tribal female workers in different occupations and the sector-wise occupational distribution can also be gauged from Table-III.13 and Table-III.14 .

Of the existing tribal female workers of Tripura, there has been a sharp fall in the share of cultivators between the periods 1961 and 1991. The proportion of household industry workers among the tribal women has also declined significantly over the decades. The sharp fall in the percentage of women workers engaged as cultivators or as household industry workers over the period from 1961 to 1991, should not be interpreted to mean that tribal women have withdrawn from workforce due to better economic conditions. The availabe data on tribal female participation rate in agriculture indicates a sharply rising proportion of agricultural labourers over the period. It is most probable that a significant proportion of the cultivators and household industry workers have joined the ranks of agricultural labourers. The existence of female agricultural labourers is found in the Census Report of 1931 (Somendra Chandra Deb Barma, 1933) and their number was 464[24]. Roy Barman (1970) also referred to the existence of slightly larger number of agricultural labourers among the tribal people of Tripura, particularly among the Mundas, Santals, Mogs and Tripuris, while among the tribal people in the hill areas of other North-Eastern States or Union Territories agricultural labourers did not constitute an important part of working force[25]. Ganguli (1985) mentioned the rise of female agricultural labourers from 2,367 in 1961 to 20,570 in 1981[26].

The increasing proporation of agricultural labourers among the tribal women workers in Tripura may be linked to the large-scale land alienation in tribal areas. Several studies on the tribals of Tripura substantiate their massive land dispossession[27]. This dispossession of the tribals from their lands has led tribal women's subordination in agriculture where they have to participate as wage labourers.

It may also be noted in Table-III. 13 that the household industry workers among the tribal women has been declining over the decades. Tribal female participation in household industry work decreased during the period from 1961 to 1971, but it again increased somewhat in 1981 and again decreased in 1991. It is a fact that the tribal household industry has been dying out under the impact of market forces and changing tastes and preferences of the people. The increasing price of yarn is also one of the major causes of decay of this traditional household industry among the tribal women in Tripura. In the remaining sectors of commerce, trade, communication, etc., tribal women constitute a microscopic part of the total number employed and the situation has not improved over the period. Their share of employment in other services also has been very small although they have made some gains in this respect during the decade 1981-1991.

For a more meaningful economic analysis tribal female workers may be grouped into those belonging to primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. Primary sector includes workers classified under industrial categories I, II, III and IV, i.e. all those who were classified as cultivators, agricultural labourers, workers in livestock, forestry,

fishing, hunting and plantations and other activities allied to agriculture and those working in mining and quarrying. Workers who have been classified under industrial categories V and VI, i.e. manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs and constructions are included in the secondary sector. In the Indian Census, workers engaged in manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs have been classified into those working in the household industries and those working in non-household industries. Tertiary sector includes workers classified under industrial categories VII, VIII and IX. i. e. those working in trade and commerce, transport, storage and communications and other services.

Table-III. 14 presents the distribution of tribal female (main) workers of Tripura into primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. While 87.74 percent of the tribal female main workers in Tripura were working in primary sector in 1961, their proportion has increased to 96.67 per cent in 1971 and again decreased to 94.56 per cent and 93.11 per cent in 1981 and 1991 respectively. In the table it is found that the proportion of workers in the secondary sector has decreased from 11.22 per cent in 1961 to 1.33 per cent in 1991. An increase in the proportion of workers from 1.04 per cent in 1961 to 5.56 per cent in 1991 is noticed in the tertiary sector.

Sector-wise distribution of tribal female workers from 1961 to 1991 clearly indicates that even today tribal women of Tripura are primarily engaged in agricultural sector where they have to work as agricultural labourers and have to be content with low-paid, toilsome arduous jobs in agriculture. The vast majority of tribal women workers have not yet moved to new, better-paid jobs in

secondary and tertiary sectors although some upward mobility from the primary sector to the tertiary sector has taken place for a microscopic section of tribal women.

Table - III. 13

Occupational Pattern of Tribal Women of Tripura. 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991

Occupation (I-IX)	1961	1971	1981	1991
I. Cultivators	83.81	64.59	55.33	54.24
II. Agr. Labourers	2.81	28.36	37.38	36.65
III. Livestock - -- Allied activities				
VI. Mining & Quarrying	1.12	3.72	0.00	0.00
V(a) Household industry	10.96	0.55	1.46	0.52
V(b) Other than household industry	0.25	0.84	1.2	0.74
VI. Construction	0.01	0.00	0.07	0.07
VII. Trade & Commerce	0.0	0.10	0.14	0.23
VIII. Transport Communication	0.00	0.01	0.04	0.05
IX. Other Series	0.94	1.83	2.53	5.28
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source : Census of India 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991

Table - III. 14

Sector-wise Occupational Distribution of Tribal Women of Tripura 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991

	Total Main Workers (I-IX)	Primary Sector (I+II+III +IV)	Secondary Sector (V(a)+ V(b)+ VI)	Tertiary Sector (VII+VIII +IX)
1961	100.00	87.74	11.22	1.04
1971	100.00	96.67	1.39	1.94
1981	100.00	94.56	2.73	2.71
1991	100.00	93.11	1.33	5.56

Note : Soure is same for Table-13 and Table-14.

Source : Census of India 1961, Vol. XXVI Tripura, Pat III and Part V-A;

Census of India 1971, series 20 Tripura, Part IIC (I) & Part V-A;

Census of India 1981, Series 21 Tripura, part - IX;

State/District primary Census Abstract of 1991 (Provisional), Tripura.

Occupational pattern of Tribal Male and Female

Table-III. 15 gives the industrial distribution of tribal male and tribal female main workers of Tripura. If we compare the occupational pattern of tribal women with that of tribal men, it is found that in all the Census years the proportions of cultivators are higher among tribal male workers than that among tribal female workers. It is

important to note that the proportion of agricultural labourers was higher among tribal males than among females in 1961, but since 1971 the proportion of agricultural laboureres has always remained higher for tribal female workers in comparison with tribal male workers. This may probably be attributed to the fact that the process of proletarisation has been more intense among tribal women than tribal men over the period between 1971 and 1991.

Among both tribal men and tribal women workers share of employment in services is very small and it is smaller among tribal women than among tribal men although both of them have made some gain in this respect during the decades 1971-91. This indicates that the expansion of avenues of paid and secured employment is not shared equally by tribal men and tribal women in Tripura. In Tribal society it is found that women are characterised by high incidence of illiteracy and perhaps this is one of the reasons of their low availability of employment opportunities in 'other services'.

Participation in occupations like household industry, manufacturing, trade and commerce, transport, storage and communications has been quite insignificant for both tribal male and tribal female workers althogh in household industry the proportion of tribal women workers were not insignificant in 1961.

Table-III. 16 presents sector-wise distribution of tribal male and tribal female workers in Tripura. This sector-wise distribution of workers is considered to provide a rough indication of the stages of development of the economy of the tribal people of the State. Table-III. 16

clearly indicates that the primary sector is predominant for both tribal male and tribal female workers till today in Ttripura. From the Census data it is observed that the proportion of tribal female workers in the primary sector was higher than that of their male counterparts in 1981 and 1991 whereas the proportion of both male and female workers in the primary sector was very similar in 1971. This indicates that occupational diversification, however small it is, has been taking place more in favour of tribal males during the last couple of decades.

Employment opportunity in secondary and tertiary sectors is least for both tribal male and tribal female workers. Here also some improvement in employment in tertiary sector (although not significant enough), has been relatively larger for tribal male workers.

Occupational Pattern of Tribal and Non-tribal Women

Table-III. 17 gives the industrial distribution of tribal and non-tribal female main workers of the State. The occupational structure indicates that the proportion of cultivators has declined for both tribal and non-tribal women but the magnitude of decline is much greater for the tribal women. The proportion of cultivators decreased by a significant margin of 29.57 percentage points for the tribal women workers whereas the corresponding figure is 20.03 percentage points for the non-tribal women during the period from 1961 to 1991. On the other hand, the proportion of agricultural labourers has increased at a much faster rate-among the tribal women than among the non-tribal women. For the non-tribal women the proportion of agricultural labourers increased by a margin of 17.96

percentage points over three decades whereas the margin is as high as 33. 84 percentage points for the tribal women during the same period. This scenario clearly indicates that impoverishment of women workers is greater among the tribals than among the non-tribals in Tripura.

It is also to be noted that while household industry among the tribal women is struggling for its existence, the proportion of household industry workers among non-tribal women has increased between the period 1971 and 1991. In other than household industry' tribal women's participation is not mentionable but for the non-tribal women the proportion of workers in 'other than household industry' is not negligible although the proportion has declined during the decade 1981-1991. From the Census data it is found that non-tribal women are spectacularly ahead of tribal women in the matter of being attracted to the non-household sector of manufacturing activities. In trade and commerce also the proportion of non-tribal women workers is not negligible whereas it is insignificant for the tribal women.

The most striking feature that emerges from Table-III. 17 is that in 'other services' the proportion of the non-tribal women worker has increased considerably, from 13.74 per cent in 1961 to 42.68 per cent in 1991 whereas for the tribal women the corresponding figures are 0.96 per cent in 1961 to 5.28 per cent in 1991. From the Census data it appears that the expanding employment opportunities in 'other services' which include mostly government service in Tripura has not benefited the tribal women as much as the non-tribal women.

The employment growth in the main sectors, primary,

secondary and tertiary for the tribal and non-tribal female workers, for 1961-1991 is given in Table-III. 18. Even a cursory perusal would reveal that economic development over three decades in Tripura has not enabled tribal women to shift to better-paid non-agricultural activities. The occupational structure of tribal women workers indicates their dependence on the primary sector and this sector accounts for 93.11 per cent of the tribal female workforce while the shares of secondary and tertiary sectors are 1.33 per cent and 5.56 per cent respectively in 1991. On the other hand, primary, secondary and tertiary sectors account for 44.44 per cent, 9.95 per cent and 45.72 per cent of the non-tribal women working force. The scenario clearly indicates that for non-tribal women workers diversification of economic activities has been achieved to some extent over the period between 1961 and 1991. Of course, their disproportionate dependence on the tertiary sector is not a healthy sign of development. But diversification of economic activities for tribal women workers is almost absent. Not to speak of the secondary sector, their share in tertiary sector is also very negligible compared to the share of non-tribal women workers. It is extremely important to note that the process of development during the period under our study has brought unequal benefit for tribal and non-tribal women of the State. This duality is one of the features of Tripura's distinctive pattern of development and this calls for deeper study.

Table-III. 19 and Table-III. 20 give occupational distribution among general, tribal and non-tribal women workers. Here it is to be noted that in Tripura, primary, secondary and tertiary sectors account for 72.64 per cent,

4.93 per cent and 22.43 per cent of the general women working force (including tribal and non-tribal women workers), and 93.11 per cent, 1.33 per cent and 5.56 per cent of the tribal women working force. Primary, secondary and tertiary sectors account for 44.33 per cent, 9.95 per cent and 45.72 per cent of the non-tribal women workers.

Occupational Pattern of Women Among Different Tribal Groups

From Table-III. 21 it is evident that agriculture remains the mainstay of female employment among all major tribal groups in Tripura. But the proportion of tribal female main workers returned as cultivators has declined among all the tribes during the period 1961 to 1981 and this decline is sharpest among the Mogs followed by the Tripuris. Proletarization of tribal women, from cultivators to agricultural labourers, has occurred in a greater proportion among the Mogs and Tripuris. Massive land alienation, inequitious land distribution and increasing dependence for jobs in the agricultural sector leave only wage labour open to these women.

Decline of the household industry for all the tribal groups can also be noted in Table-III. 21. It is probable that tribal household industry has been dying out under the impact of market forces which we have noted earlier. Participation in occupations like construction work, trade and commerce, transport, storage and communication has been quite insignificant.

Regarding other services it is to be noted that a large proportion of the workers in 'other services' seem to be government employees. If so, the number of tribal female

government employees must have been very small up to 1971. The position is slightly improved at present for tribal female workers of all groups except the Mogs.

Table-III. 22 presents sector-wise occupational distribution of women at work among different tribal groups. It is found that the proportion of female workers engaged in primary sector is very high among all the tribal groups in Tripura. The highest figure of 99.25 per cent has been recorded for the Jamatias followed by the Riangs (98.71 per cent) in 1981.

Tribal female workers engaged in secondary sector are very small in number and their proportion vary from 0.21 per cent to 1.50 per cent in 1981. Among all the major tribal groups the proportion of workers engaged in secondary sector has declined between the period 1961 and 1981.

Among the major tribes of Tripura female workers engaged in tertiary sector was highest for the Chakmas followed by the Tripuris in 1981. It is interesting to note that the proportion of workers engaged in the tertiary sector was highest for the Mog women in 1961 (4.91 per cent) but it has declined in 1981 while for all other selected major tribes the proportion has been increasing. Regarding employment in the tertiary sector the lowest figure has been noticed for the Jamatia women. This clearly indicates that the sectoral distribution of employment of tribal women is not even among different tribal groups in Tripura.

Occupational Pattern of Tribal Women of North-Eastern States

A scrutiny of the data presented in Table-III. 23 shows

that agriculture has remained the overwhelming predominant source of livelihood among the tribal women of all North-Eastern States over the decades 1971 and 1991. Several scholars have also emphasised the fact[28]. From the Census data it is found that the proportion of tribal female workers in cultivation continues to be highest in Arunachal Pradesh followed by Nagaland and Manipur during the period from 1971 to 1991. Among these seven North-Eastern States the proportion of tribal female workers in cultivation continues to be lowest in Tripura followed by Meghalaya, Mizoram and Assam although in all cases the proportion is higher than that among the tribal female workers of India as a whole. Again, it is interesting to note that Tripura has been containing the largest proportion of agricultural labourers among the North-Eastern States. This indicates that proportion of landless workers in agriculture are more here than elsewhere of the region and this is also indicative of the extent of poverty among the tribal women of Tripura. The proportion of agricultural labour has been increasing in a significant way in Meghalaya and Assam. It is of great concern that even in the matrilineal tribal society in Meghalaya more and more tribal women workers are joining the rank of agricultural labourers. The situation is more distressing in this respect among the tribal women of the country as a whole. Both in 1971 and 1981 the proportion of agricultural labourers was higher than the proportion of cultivators. Although the proportion of the latter has increased marginally in 1991, the proportion of agricultural labourer has remained almost constant.

As regard other workers, it is highest in Mizoram and almost equally significant in Meghalaya in the Census

year 1991. Shift from agriculture towards other works for the tribal women of Arunachal Pradesh is hardly noticeable till 1991.

In this chapter attempts have been made to put together Census data on work participation and occupational pattern of tribal women of Tripura for the period from 1961 to 1991. This provides a statistical profile which may serve as a background for the analysis of results of our field study.

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Table - III. 9

Work Participation Rates (PCS) of Women of Different Tribal Groups in 1961, 1971 and 1981 Tripura.

Tribes	Total				Rural				Urban			
	1961	1971	1981 (Main)	1981 (Main + Marginal)	1961	1971	1981 (Main)	1981 (Main + Marginal)	1961	1971	1981 (Main)	1981 (Main + Marginal)
All tribes	48.24	9.55	19.02	27.85	48.67	9.58	19.12	28.06	5.38	6.75	10.89	10.97
Tripuri	46.34	7.46	17.64	26.74	47.11	7.48	17.83	27.11	5.11	6.74	10.44	10.5
Riang	53.67	15.33	20.45	30.88	53.68	15.34	20.46	30.9	-	-	15.15	-
Jamatia	49.25	9.00	25.06	31.42	49.26	9.00	24.08	32.45	-	11.11	6.06	-
Chakma	50.19	9.59	13.82	20.64	50.26	9.56	13.81	20.67	6.25	20.59	17.44	-
Halam	51.83	11.30	23.41	30.15	51.83	11.31	23.43	30.18	-	-	-	-
Mog	47.61	8.28	15.27	26.68	47.63	8.26	15.30	26.71	-	33.33	6.67	-
Remaining 13 tribes together	43.17	13.31	24.13	32.37	46.66	13.36	24.2	32.33	0.31	-	17.31	17.35

Source : Census of India 1961, Vol. XXVI, Part III Part V-A;
Census of India 1971, Series-20 Tripura, Part IIC(i) and Part V-A;
Census of India 1981, Series-21, Tripura, Part-IX;
State/District Primary Census Abstract of 1991 (Provisional), Tripura.

Table - III. 15

Occupational Pattern of Tribal Men and Tribal Women in 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991, Tripura (Rural + Urban)

	1961		1971		1981		1991	
Occupation (I-IX)	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
I. Cultivators	88.19	83.81	77.26	64.59	66.89	55.33	58.58	54.24
II. Agri. labourers	5.83	2.81	18.72	28.36	25.15	37.38	27.23	36.65
III. Livestock-Allied activities	1.18	1.12	0.8	3.72	1.89	1.85	1.70	2.22
IV. Mining and quarrying	-	-	-	-	0.05	-	0.24	-
V (a) Household industry	0.45	10.96	0.04	0.55	0.14	1.46	0.27	0.52
V (b) Other than h. h. industry	0.28	0.25	0.19	0.84	0.72	1.2	0.75	0.74
VI. Construction	0.08	0.01	0.03	-	0.28	0.07	0.25	0.07
VII. Trade and Commerce	0.34	0.10	0.19	0.10	0.41	0.14	0.99	0.23
VIII. Transport, Storage and Communication	0.11	-	0.17	0.01	0.27	0.04	0.55	0.05
IX. Other Services	3.54	0.94	2.60	1.83	4.20	2.53	9.44	5.28
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source : Census of India 1961, Vol. XXVI Tripura, Part III and Part V-A;
Census of India 1971, Series 20 Tripura, Part IIC(i) and Part V-A;
Census of Indian 1981, Series 21 Tripura, Part - IX;
State/District Primary Census Abstract of 1991 (Provisional) Tripura.

Table - III. 16

Sector-wise Distribution of Tribal Male and Tribal Female Workers in 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991, Tripura

Occupation (I-IX)	1961		1971		1981		1991	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total Main Workers (I-IX)	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Primary Sector (I+II+III)	95.2	87.74	96.78	96.67	93.98	94.56	87.75	93.11
Secondary Sector (V(a)+V(b)+VI)	0.81	11.12	0.26	1.39	1.14	2.73	1.27	1.33
Tertiary Sector (VII+VIII+IX)	3.99	1.04	2.96	1.94	4.88	2.71	10.98	5.56

Source : Census of India 1961, Vol. XXVI Tripura, part III and Part V-A;
Census of India 1971, Series 20 Tripura, part IIC(i) and Part V-A;
Census of India 1981, Series 21 Tripura, Part-IX;
State/District Primary Census Abstract of 1991 (Provisional), Tripura.

Table - III. 17

Occupational Distribution of Tribal and Non-tribal women at work in 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991, Tripura

	Tribal				Non-Tribal			
Occupation	1961	1971	1981	1991	1961	1971	1981	1991
1. Cultivators	83.81	64.59	55.33	54.24	34.47	15.94	11.81	14.44
II. Agri. Labourers	2.81	28.36	37.38	36.65	4.11	17.26	23.67	22.67
III. Livestock, ---- Allied activities	1.12	3.72	1.85	2.22	11.43	16.34	8.9	7.64
IV. Mining and quarr-ying	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.05	0.18
V(a) Household industry	10.96	0.55	1.46	0.52	29.16	4.05	4.00	5.34
V(b). Other than household industry	0.25	0.84	1.2	0.74	5.22	4.22	6.66	3.7
VI. Construction	0.01	-	0.07	0.07	0.29	0.55	0.46	0.91
VII. Trade and Commerce	0.10	0.10	0.14	0.23	1.55	3.56	2.43	2.57
VIII. Transport, shortage & communication	-	0.01	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.35	0.4	0.47
IX. Other Services	0.96	1.83	2.53	5.28	13.74	37.74	40.62	42.68
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source : Census of India 1961, Vol. XXVI Tripura, Part III and Part I-A, Vol. XXVI Tripura, V-A;
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State/District Primary Census Abstract of 1991 (Provisional), Tripura.

Table - III. 18

Sector-wise Distribution of Tribal and Non-Tribal Women at work in 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991, Tripura

	Tribal				Non-Tribal			
	1961	1971	1981	1991	1961	1971	1981	1991
Total Main Workers (I-IX)	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Primary Sector (I, II, III & IV)	87.74	96.67	94.56	93.11	50.01	49.54	44.43	44.33
Secondary Sector (V(a), V(b), VI)	11.22	1.39	2.73	1.33	34.67	8.82	12.12	9.95
Tertiary Sector (VII, VIII and IX)	1.04	1.94	2.71	5.56	15.32	41.64	43.45	45.72

Source : Census of India 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991.

Table - III. 19

Occupational Dstribution of General, Tribal and Non-Tribal Women at Work in 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991, Triura (Rural + Urban)

	General				Tribal				Non-Tribal			
Occupation :	1961	1971	1981	1991	1961	1971	1981	1991	1961	1971	1981	1991
Cultivators	70.81	43.94	38.27	37.54	83.81	64.59	55.33	54.24	34.47	15.94	11.81	14.44
Agr. labourers	3.13	23.63	32.07	30.53	2.81	28.36	37.38	36.65	4.11	17.26	23.67	22.07
Livestock-allied activities	3.83	9.08	4.60	4.49	1.12	3.72	1.85	2.22	11.43	16.34	8.9	7.64
Mining & quarrying	-	-	0.02	0.08	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.05	0.18
Household industry	15.75	2.04	2.45	2.54	10.96	0.55	1.46	0.52	29.16	4.05	4.00	5.34
Other than h. h. industry	1.56	2.28	3.33	1.97	0.25	0.84	1.2	0.74	5.22	4.22	6.66	3.7
Construction	0.16	0.23	0.62	0.42	0.01	-	0.07	0.07	0.29	0.55	1.46	0.91
Trade and Commerce	0.45	1.57	1.06	1.23	0.10	0.10	0.14	0.23	1.55	3.56	2.43	2.57
Transport, Storage and communication	-	0.16	0.18	0.23	-	0.01	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.35	0.4	0.47
Other Services	4.31	17.07	17.40	20.97	0.94	1.83	2.53	5.28	13.74	37.73	40.62	42.68
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source : Census of India 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991

Table - III. 20

Sector-wise Distribution of General, Tribal and Non-tribal Women at Work in 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991, Tripura.

	General				Tribal				Non-Tribal			
Occupation :	1961	1971	1981	1991	1961	1971	1981	1991	1961	1971	1981	1991
Total Main Workers (I-IX)	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Primary Sector (I+II+III+IV)	77.77	76.65	74.96	72.64	87.74	96.67	94.56	93.11	50.01	49.54	44.43	44.33
Secondary Scetor (V(a) + V(b)+VI)	17.47	4.55	6.4	4.93	11.22	1.39	2.73	1.33	34.67	8.82	12.12	9.95
Tertiary Sector (VII+VIII+IX)	4.76	18.8	18.64	22.43	1.04	1.94	2.71	5.56	15.32	41.64	43.45	45.72

Source : Census of India 1961, Vol. XXVI Tripura, Part III Part V-A; Part-A
Census of India 1971, Series 20 Tripura, Part IIC(i) and Part V-A; Part I-A, Series 20 Tripura
Census of India 1981, Series 21 Tripura, Part II-B series 21 Tripura Part-IX;
State/District Primary Census Abstract of 1991 (Provisional), Tripura.

Table - III. 21

Tribe-wise Occupational Structure of Women at Work in 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991, Tripura

	Tripuri			Riang			Jamatia			Chakma		
Occupation :	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981
I. Cultivation	83.52	61.95	50.69	87.02	84.42	75.94	93.45	65.15	67.03	84.73	69.01	71.58
II. Agri. labourers	3.1	33.8	44.71	1.02	14.46	22.50	1.76	34.33	32.22	1.41	28.69	22.29
III. Live-stock-Allied activities	-	0.29	0.28	-	-	0.27	-	-	-	-	0.32	0.47
IV. Mining and quarrying	0.02	-	-	-	-	-	0.15	-	-	0.07	-	-
V(a) Household industry	12.36	0.71	0.55	10.93	0.83	0.32	4.37	-	0.19	13.59	-	1.12
V(b) Other than h. h. industry	0.15	0.14	0.33	0.48	0.06	0.03	-	0.03	0.02	-	0.07	0.38
VI. construction	-	0.12	0.07	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VII. Trade and Commerce	0.04	0.15	0.11	-	-	0.6	-	0.03	0.11	-	-	0.21
VIII. Transport & Communication	-	0.03	0.04	-	-	0.11	-	-	-	-	-	-
IX. Other services	1.81	2.81	3.22	0.55	0.23	0.77	0.27	0.46	0.43	0.20	1.91	3.95
Total Main Workers	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Continuation Table of III. 21

	Halam			Mog			Remaining 13 tribes together		
	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981
I. Cultivation	90.05	71.69	62.66	79.2	44.75	34.07	71.79	36.81	34.49
II. Agri. labour	0.95	26.20	34.50	9.74	51.5	59.40	4.73	27.18	32.80
III. Live-stock-Allied activities	-	0.67	-	-	0.56	3.85	2.54	16.46	11.04
IV. Mining and quarrying	-	-	-	-	-	-	7.69	11.20	5.90
V(a). Household industry	8.45	-	0.12	5.49	0.56	-	9.73	0.26	0.98
V(b) Other than h. h. industry	0.4	-	0.09	0.66	-	0.14	0.50	5.97	10.70
VI. Constructions	-	-	0.06	-	-	0.14	0.47	0.03	0.36
VII. Trade and Commerce	-	-	-	0.41	0.2	0.70	0.03	-	0.40
VIII. Transport & Communications	-	-	0.06	-	-	-	-	-	-
IX. Other Services	0.15	1.44	2.51	4.5	2.43	1.70	2.52	2.09	3.33
Total Main Work	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source : Census of India 1961, 1971 and 1981, Special Tables on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of Triura

Table - III. 22

Sector-wise Occupational Distribution of Women at Work Among Different Tribal Groups in 1961, 1971 and 1981, Tripura (Rural + Urban)

Tribes	Year	Total Main Workers (I-IX)	Primary Sector (I+II+III + IV (V(a) + V(b)+VI)	Secondary Sector	Tertiary Sector (VII+VIII + IX)
Tripuri	1961	100.00	86.64	12.51	0.85
	1971	100.00	96.04	0.97	2.99
	1981	100.00	95.68	0.95	3.37
Riang	1961	100.00	88.04	11.41	0.55
	1971	100.00	98.88	0.89	0.23
	1981	100.00	98.71	0.35	0.94
Jamatia	1961	100.00	95.36	4.37	0.27
	1971	100.00	99.48	0.03	0.49
	1981	100.00	99.25	0.21	0.54
Chakma	1961	100.00	86.21	13.59	0.20
	1971	100.00	98.02	0.07	1.91
	1981	100.00	94.34	1.50	4.16
Halam	1961	100.00	91.0	8.85	0.15
	1971	100.00	98.56	Nil	1.44
	1981	100.00	97.16	0.27	2.57
Mog	1961	100.00	88.94	6.15	4.91
	1971	100.00	96.81	0.56	2.63
	1981	100.00	97.32	0.28	2.40
Remaining	1961	100.00	86.75	10.7	2.55
13 tribes	1971	100.00	91.65	6.26	2.09
together	1981	100.00	84.23	12.04	3.73

Source : Census of India, 1961, 1971 and 1981, Special Tables on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of Tripura.

Table - III. 23

Precentage of Cultivators, agricultural Labourers and Other Workers toTotal Tribal Female Workers in 1971, 1981 and 1991 in India & North-Eastern States

India/ States/U. Territories		Total Workers	Cultivators	Agri Labour-ers	Other Workers
India	1971	100.00	42.70	48.95	8.35
	1981	100.00	43.53	44.98	11.49
	1991	100.00	47.04	44.28	8.68
Arunachal Pradesh	1971	100.00	97.57	1.73	0.7
	1981	100.00	97.59	0.71	1.7
	1991	100.00	93.43	1.40	5.17
Assam	1971	100.00	88.23	3.9	7.87
	1981	100.00	N. A.	N. A.	N. A.
	1991	100.00	80.52	12.21	7.27
Manipur	1971	100.00	96.99	0.28	2.73
	1981	100.00	92.77	2.23	5.0
	1991	100.00	90.72	2.82	6.46
Meghalaya	1971	100.00	80.75	9.93	9.32
	1981	100.00	72.30	10.38	17.32
	1991	100.00	64.78	13.99	21.23
Mizoram	-	-	-	-	-
	1981	100.00	86.58	2.11	11.31
	1991	100.00	74.44	2.94	22.62
Nagaland	1971	100.00	97.11	0.97	1.92
	1981	100.00	94.98	0.2	4.82
	1991	100.00	92.33	0.38	7.29
Tripura	1971	100.00	64.59	28.36	7.05
	1981	100.00	55.33	37.38	7.29
	1991	100.00	54.24	36.65	9.11

Source : Census of India, 1961, 1971 and 1981, Special Tables on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for India and North-Eastern States.

CHAPTER - IV

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF RURAL TRIBAL WOMEN OF TRIPURA (As Revealed from the Field Study) : QUANTITATIVE ASPECTS

In the villages of Tripura, tribal women workers are found everywhere. They are found in jhum field working with their men in the remote tribal villages where development is slow to penetrate and jhum is practised till today. Tribal women can be found in groups transplanting and weeding in paddy fields where plough cultivation is the order of the day. Collecting fuel or gathering forest products by the tribal women is a common sight in a tribal village. They do these and many other works for sustaining their families in addition to cooking, cleaning, fetching water and looking after children and old - which are considered as women's work almost everywhere. In fact, tribal women do not know what 'rest' is. The important role that tribal women play in the economy of home and society does not mean that it is officially recognised or rewarded. Nor does it mean that tribal women have enough gainful employment throughout the year. But obviously women of our four selected tribal villages under present study participate in economic activities in many ways without which their families would probably not be able to survive at all. Yet, these women are often listed in the Census under the category of 'non-workers'.

What is attempted in this study is to capture, as far as practicable, the work and contribution of tribal women to their home and society. This has been examined with reference to our selected tribal villages of Tripura. The definition which we have explained in the introductory

chapter may be recalled here. According to our concept, participation in economic activities means involvement in activities other than

Table-IV. 1

Percentage of Tribal and Non-tribal Workers to Total Tribal and Non-Tribal Populations Respectively in the five Villages Under Study.

Village	Tribe/Non-trib	Total Popul-ation	Number of workers	Percentage of workers to Total Population
Herma	Tripuri	241	119	49.38
Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para	Riang	192	104	54.17
Natun Dewanbari	Jamatia	233	108	46.35
Mahamuni	Mog	183	93	50.82
Daksin Charilam Madhyapara	Bengali	241	86	35.68

Source : Field Survey

Table - IV. 2

Percentage of Tribal and Non-Tribal Workers to Total Tribal and Non-Tribal Populations Respectively in the Age Group 15 to 59 in the five Villages Under Study

Village	Tribe/Non-tribe	Population in the Age Group 15-59	Number of workers in the Age Groups 15-59	Percentage of workers to Total Population in the Age Group 15-59
Herma	Tripuri	127	105	82.68
Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para	Riang	98	89	90.81
Natun Dewanbari	Jamatia	131	99	75.57
Mahamuni	Mog	101	84	83.16
Daksin Charilam Madhyapara	Bengali	148	82	55.40

Source : Field Survey

household chores and child care for at least one hour per day on an average during the reference period, that is, 365 days preceding the last day of the study in the selected villages. For quantifying the extent and intensity of economic participation we have used participation rate. As noted in the previous chapter, participation rate denotes the percentage of population engaged in economic activities with or without remuneration. In estimating participation rate of men and women, different age groups and marital status of women are also considered. On the point of

economic participation comparisons have been made between tribal men and women, women of four selected tribes, and tribal and non-tribal women. On the same point comparisons have also been made between tribal women of different income groups and different land-owning groups within the same tribal community. Before going into the details we are presenting some tables (IV. 1 to IV. 5) to have an overall idea about the participation rates of tribal and non-tribal people of four tribal and one non-tribal villages under the study.

Economic Participation of Tribal Men and Women : A Comparative Analysis

The centuries old perception of sexual division of labour between men as bread-earners and women as home-makers does not hold true for the tribal villages under our study. The recorded history of Tripura[1] indicates that, in the traditional jhum economy tribal women had been participating in almost all jhuming activities with their men although there was some sort of division of labour on the basis of sex[2]. In Tripura, jhuming, an occupation in which women play a significant role, is still carried on by some of the tribal house-holds. This has been found in two of our selected villages. Where land is not a limiting factor, the amount or extent of jhum is a function of the number of working hands. Boserup (1970) has shown that, in African context of shifting cultivation the institution of polygamy is an important determinant of female participation in work where many wives and many sons are important assets to households[3]. Similar phenomena may be observed among the Nishings of Arunachal Pradesh who are jhumias[4]. However, in some of our selected villages where jhum is no longer practised and settled cultivation

has become the order of the day and in some other where both jhum and settled cultivation are being practised, we have seen how tribal women are participating in productive activities as their men do either for maintaining their families and for supplementing poor income from other sources. Even with the introduction of plough cultivation among the tribal people women's work has by no means decreased. Tribal women belonging to the households with relatively small amount of land or with no land, go to work as wage labourers on others' farm to supplement family income. Apart from this, they have been participating in a number of economically fruitful activities related to the augmentation of real income of the household which can be termed as other subsistence activities. In our selected tribal villages it is also found that, the economic contribution of women in most situations is far from supplementary, optional or dispensable. On the contrary, it becomes vital and essential in every way. All of such works done by women are not considered as work proper in the official statistics and it is probably because of this fact the Census data show wide difference in economic participation between tribal men and women. It may be made clear again that, at the time of estimation of a number of economically active persons based on time spent in different activities we have included these subsistence activities mostly done by the women in our selected villages. The following tables show participation rates of tribal men and women of four tribal villages under study.

Participation Rate as a Measure of Economic Participation

The extent of economic participation of tribal women

can be comprehended from their participation rate. Participation rate, as we have mentioned earlier, is used in this study as the prime measure of economic participation of our respondents in selected villages. Tables worked out on village level data collected through household schedules show that, economic participation of tribal women is not much lower than that of their men. Among the Tripuris of village Herma 51.58 per cent of the men and 46.95 per cent of the women are workers. The work participation rate of the Riang men is found to be 55.10 per cent and for their women it is 53.19 per cent in village Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para. Among the Jamatias the participation rate for the women is 50.90 per cent while it is only 42.27 per cent for the men. It is significant that the jamatia women in village Natun Dewanbari are found more economically active than their menfolk. The corresponding figures are 52.47 per cent and 48.78 per cent for the Mog men and women respectively in village Mahamuni.

In estimating age specific participation rates, men and women of four tribal groups in the age group 15 to 59, are considered separately. It is because of the fact that this is generally the most active age group. Age-wise distribution of workers will be discussed later on. If we consider the age group 15-59, we get a higher participation rate for both males and females than if we take all the age groups together. Table - IV. 7 shows that female participation rate is higher than that of their males in the age group 15-59 among the Riangs and Jamatias.

The fact that comes to light from these tables is not only that female work participation rate is much higher than is suggested by the Census figures but also that women constitute almost equal labour force in economic activities

among the tribals in the villages under investigation. This difference between two sets of data may be attributed to the exclusion of a number of economic activities of women from the purview of the Census data on working population.

Tribal women's significant role in their economy is not unique in Tripura but it is found in many other tribal societies of India[5] and outside, particularly, in African countries[6]. Village studies on the Dimasa women of North Cachar Hills District of Assam and the Garo women of Garo Hills District of Meghalaya also show that in both the villages participation rate of women is higher than that of their men[7]. While visiting the tribal villages we have realised the truth of Lewin's (1984) assertion : "Among all hill people woman is the hardest worker, the chief toiler, ..."[8]. It was very difficult on the part of the researcher to meet an able-bodied adult woman in the house during day time. Tribal men, in general, are very lethargic as compared to the women. Among the Jamatias of Natun Dewanbari we have noticed that the males often tend to live a lazy life on the labour of the females, while away their time either in gossiping and smoking or drinking 'chuak' (home-made liquor) which is also brewed by women and sitting idle in the busy hours of day time. D. N. Mazumdar (1944) observed similar attitude of men among some tribes in some parts of Choto-Nagpur where men often remain at home and send their womenfolk to work for the family, and are not ashamed of living on the income of their wives[9]. References of 'lazy' men are also found among the Lushai people of Mizoram[10] and among the tribes of Manipur[11]. Practically it is the hard labour of women on which Jamatia families of Natun Dewanbari are subsisting[12]. A study on the Jamatias of Tripura shows

that, sometimes miscarriage takes place owing to excessive hard work of women[13]. In the Tripuri village also we have found some youths sleeping inside their mud and bamboo huts in the mid day, while women are toiling in the field.

Like Natun Dewanbari in other three villages also one can observe how women have been participating in all sorts of productive works in addition to their household activities and child care for maintaining their families. In fact, tribal women have to bear the whole burden of daily life. They work harder than men and get much less time for relaxation as preference for leisure is very strong among the men workers which depress the supply of labour[14]. In Tripura tribal villages have been going through the phase of transition from the shifting type where the villagers entirely depend on jhuming as the main source of livelihood, to the settled cultivation, where permanent plough cultivation forms the mainstay of the economy. We hope to show tribal women's contribution as workers in this changing phase of the economy.

Tribal Male and Female Workers in Different Age Groups

In our selected tribal villages it is found that working age for women generally ranges between 15 and 65. Women workers of age even below 15 and above 65 are not rare. The modal age group of women workers is found to be 25-44.

Although Hunter (1973) found large number of child workers in agriculture among the Manipuris, Tripuris and Kukis in Tripura[15], in our surveyed villages none below 13 years of age is returned as worker. It is only among the Tripuris in village herma that one boy of 14

years is reported as worker. On the contrary, four girls, one at age 14 among the Tripuris, two at age 13 to 14 among the Riangs and one at age 14 among the Mogs are found as workers in the villages, Herma, Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para and Mahamuni respectively. Not only in this age group but also in the age group 15-19, more females than males are found to be workers among the tribal people of the four villages. Similar phenomenon of larger number of females below age 17 was noticed among the Choudhuris in Surat District of Gujarat[16]. Table-IV. 8 shows that between the age group 15-19 there are 10 male workers and 20 female workers among our selected four major tribal groups together. It is also observed in the selected villages that more boys than girls are attending schools[17].

Table-IV. 8 gives the age-wise distribution of workers in the selected villages. In many cases children begin to go to the field with their mothers when they are very young. A village study on the Dimasa tribe of North Cachar Hills District in Assam revealed that the Dimasa girls start working even before adolescence while boys at that age mostly indulge in sports and frolicsome activities[18]. In our selected tribal villages, the early age in starting work in the fields has affected the schooling prospects of most of the female respondents. Many of our worker respondents had to stop schooling because of financial difficulties at home, to look after younger children, to take care of the home, to help mothers in work both inside and outside home, or because of not having sufficient interest which itself is a combined result of all other factors. A large number of tribal women in all the four villages has come under the category of illiterates.

Table-IV. 8 shows that greater percentage of females than males in the age group 20-24 are workers among all the four tribal groups. However, almost all tribal males and females in the age group 25-44 are engaged in some economic activities. Very few women in this age group are found confined only to domestic activities like cooking food, rearing children, looking after the home etc. It is also improtant to note in the table that, the percentage of male workers is higher than that of females in the age above 65. It is because of the fact that the excessive strain, such as child-birth and other reporductive work, work in the field and other subsistence works, which tribal women have to do from their very young age decreases their ability to work as they advance in age and old age comes earlier for women than for men.

Marital Status and Economic Participation of Tribal women

Since women's primary obligations revolve around family-keeping almost everywhere, some studies show that the incidence of withdrawal from work force is higher for married women vis-a-vis the unmarried[19]. More unmarried than married tribal women workers were observed by a study based on the tribal women labourers of Ranchi district in Bihar[20]. But the results of our field study in this respect are different. Distribution of tribal women workers by marital status in the selected tribal villages is shown in Table-IV. 9.

Our study reveals that for tribal women marriage is not negatively correlated with their economic participation. This indicates that, marriage does not stand in the way of tribal women's participation in economic activities.

Majority of the women workers in four selected tribal villages are found married. From Table-IV. 9 it is evident that percentage of married tribal women ranges from 78 per cent to 90 per cent among four tribal groups. High percentage of married women in labour force brings to light their responsibility towards the household. The proportion of unmarried women workers is lowest among the Tripuris and highest among the Jamatias. During our field study in Tripuri village, Herma, one old Tripuri man told the researcher that now-a-days unmarried Tripuri girls are reluctant to participate in economic activities even in their family farms. However, among the tribal women workers we have found four widows : two among the Tripuris, one among the Jamatias and one among the Mogs. Although divorce and desertion are not common in the four selected tribal villages, we have found one divorced woman worker among the Tripuris. She is legally divorced by her husband. One woman worker is found deserted by her husband among the Jamatias.

Generally child marriage is not prevalent among the tribes of Tripura[21] as well as other parts of India[22]. But in our selected villages two women workers, one among the Tripuris and one among the Mogs, in the age group 10-14 are found married. Among the Riangs also one woman worker of age 15 is found married. A study on the Jamatias of Tripura[23] reveals the prevalence of child marriage among the Jamatias of backward villages where the average age of marriage varies from 12 to 16 in the case of males and 15 to 18 in the case of females. Regarding the age range of the girls their view is that, the girls should be physically fit for agricultural and domestic work before their marriage. But we have not observed any married

woman worker of age below 20 among the Jamatias of Natun Dewanbari.

Hours of Works as a Measure of Participation

For women almost everywhere it is very difficult to distinguish between the working hours in economically productive activities and household activities. There seems to be a continuum between the "productive" work and the "reproductive" work - work in the fields and housework. Some types of tribal women's work such as vegetable growing on the land adjacent to dwelling house, looking after pigs, taking care of chickens, drying paddy, liquor brewing are performed in between cooking or other household works. Again, husking rice, supervision of agricultural activities are performed while carrying children on their back. These few examples show that in the case of tribal women, making strict time-based division between different types of works is quite difficult. However, an attempt has been made to study the approximate labour time spent by men and women workers in economic activities in our tribal villages. Table-IV. 10 shows per person per day average hours of productive work performed by tribal men and women.

Table-IV. 10. based on coverage of time spent on economic activities by tribal men and women, shows that among the Riangs and Jamatias women devote longer hours than their men to economic activities. Among the Tipuris and Mogs hours of work by men and women are almost equal.

Among the households belonging to four different tribal communities day to day work-routine does not differ very much. The working day of a tribal woman lasts from dawn to dusk. Her day beings at about 5 a.m. and continues up

to 8 p. m. with one hour's rest between housework and field work during the agricultural season. Before and after work in the fields women have to work for four to five hours in and around the house. Daily active time is thus about 13 to 14 hours for women in the peak season. In contrast, men's average daily active time is eight to nine hours during this season. Usually men do not work after returning home in the evening.

It is obseved that among the tribal communities women devote long hours to subsistence activities such as gathering forest products, collecting fuel, collecting small fish in the lean season to keen the pot boiling. The jhum field being distant from dwelling houses take much of their time and energy. Weaving clothes and brewing liquor are all women's work mostly performed at night. Fetching water takes much of time and effort. In the villages where both jhum and settled cultivation are practised, women's working hours are longer than the women in villages with settled cultivation only because in most cases jhum has now become the primary responsibility of women in addition to their work in settled cultivation.

Types of Work Done by Tribal Men and Women

In our surveyed tribal villages both men and women have to do several types of work for their livelihood. It is due to the fact that majority of the tribal people in our villages are poor and for them one form of productive activity is not sufficient to guarantee their survival - a combination of several economic activities is required. Similarly, in a poor tribal household no single man is able to guarantee family survival. Men, women and sometimes children also have to work and combine their income from

various activities to maintain the family. Their work does not only include work on family farm or wage work but also various types of non-wage works. In some cases it is found that tribal women are the last guarantors of the survival of the family through various types of work particularly in the lean season when both men and women face the spells of unemployment in the village. Work done by women to bring 'something' to the household during the lean season has been noticed by other researchers too[24]. However, we have prepared a chart of different types of village level activities done by tribal men and women as we have observed in four tribal villages.

Chart-1 shows village level activities done by both tribal men and women, exclusively by women and exclusively by men, we have observed in four selected tribal villages. Among the activities done by both men and women, exchange labour and fishing are found rarely done by men. On the other hand, among the four tribal groups only one woman belonging to the Mog Community is found doing private tuition in the village Mahamuni.

Division of Labour between Tribal Men and Women in Agricultural Work.

We have already observed the different types of work done by the tribal men and women of our four selected tribal villages. It is found that agriculture is the main source of employment for majority of the respondents under study. Since agriculture, both settled and jhum, generates a large variety of tasks, an attempt has been made to examine the division of labour between tribal men and women engaged in these tasks.

It is noted earlier that settled cultivation is practised by

the tribal people in all the villages under investigation. Broadly, the different operations in settled cultivation include ploughing, sowing, uprooting seedlings, transplantation, weeding, harvesting and threshing. In our selected tribal villages, it has been observed that except for ploughing, which is generally a male job, in all other agricultural operations, the women participate and these are part of women's job. Taboos against women, which appears to be widespread across most cultures and certainly hold across all communities in India[25] and outside,[26] seems not so inflinching among the tribal people of the selected villages. In village Natun Dewanbari, an old Jamatia man told the researcher that a Jamatia woman did the work of ploughing in the absence of adult male in her household although we have not seen this for ourselves. In village, Herma, Tripuri men told us that, it is a convention among them that women should not plough as they are not physically able to handle it. Taboo against women ploughing is found most cruel among the Ho tribes of Singhbhum in Bihar where women are even stoned to death if they accidentally touch the plough[27]. Some scholars believe that the purpose behind this taboo is to strengthen male control over the land[28], even while women perform the bulk of the labour on the land. It is almost everywhere plough is the monopoly of men in agriculture as the potter's wheel is in pottery, although, women are believed to have been the first potters[29]. In our selected villages ploughing is done by men and it ensures that the tribal women can never conduct agricultural works on their own, without male co-operation. In the village Herma, we have observed that power-tiller is used for tilling land by some land owners which they can get from the Department of Agriculture at subsidised rate on

hour basis, and this tiller is handled exclusively by men. This indicates that mechanisation has reduced the work-load of men in preparing the soil for wet cultivation. It may be mentioned in this connection that in the village Herma, villagers cannot keep plough-animal due to chronic problem of cattle-lifting from the other side of the International Border.

While ploughing is the monopoly of men in wet cultivation, the tribal women's work-load is by no means less than their men. In sowing, up-rooting the seedlings, transplantation, weeding, harvesting and thershing both tribal men and women are participating. But uprooting the seedlings, transplantation and weeding are predominantly done by women. These are mostly labour intensive operations in wet cultivation. In all the four tribal villages transplantation is mainly done by women. They pick up the plants from the seed-bed, tie them into bundles and carry these to the field. The women put the seedlings into the wet soft soil through which they wade. Each paddy plant has to be transplanted by hand. One of the female respondents told us that men were engaged in lifting seedlings in Aman cultivation because lifting seedlings was relatively easier in Aman. But in Boro cultivation uprooting seedlings was difficult and for this women were engaged. Transplantation means bending down the whole day, wading through the muddy soil. The entire operation, mainly done by women, is purely manual labour and does not involve any tool.

Weeding is also mainly done by women. Women pluck out the weeds by hand. Like transplantation, this also means bending down the whole day. Weeding is an occupation for women which requires very careful watching

and picking for which women have to stoop bending over the crops for hours for days together. It is done mainly by women because this patience is more a virtue of women than of men[30]. Winnowing and husking also require similar patience as any carelessness would mean a loss of the anticipated yield.

Harvesting is both men's and women's work. Parctically, all family members participate in this operation. In comparatively well-to-do households threshing is done on their yards. Usually men drive animals over the paddy. When small quantities of paddy are harvested by poor tribal households who do not possess cattle or hire cattle, threshing is done by beating out the grain by hands and here also more women than men perform this task. The charge of winnowing and husking more frequently rests with women. Apart from these, preparing the crop for storage and immediate consumption, drying, cleaning and processing rice are done by women.

Jute processing and cleaning are done by both men and women. Carrying jute is mainly done by men.

In jhum, although the tribal females join in felling tree and burning them, it is mainly a task of the males. The division of labour between men and women is not always rigid and inviolable[31]. For example, jhum clearance is men's work, but in our Jamatia village it is found that women are performing almost all jhuming activities including jhum clearance while their men are busy with settled cultivation on family land.

Again, there are some activities such as, sowing, weeding, harvesting, threshing paddy, shelling sesamum,

cutting and processing jute, which are performed by both tribal men and women. Husking rice, storing and processing jhum crops rest on women. Picking of cotton in jhum field is almost exclusively done by women. Nowadays, in the villages where jhum is practised, in most cases it has become the responsibility of women and they have to devote more labour in the whole process of cultivation.

A close examination of division of labour between tribal men and women in agricultural work in four selected tribal villages shows that, women perform more agricultural operations than men in total and in each type of cultivation. Not only that, women perform those tasks which require more patience and carefulness but also tasks which are performed mainly by hand.

Chart - 1

Types of Work Done by Men and Women in Four Selected Tribal Villages

Work done by both Men and Women	Work done exclusively by Women	Work done exclusively by Men
1. Wet Cultivation	1. Cattle rearing	1. Contract agricultural labour
2. Jhum Cultivation	2. Taking care of children	2. Making and repairing agricultural implements
3. Rabi Cropping	3. Milking cow	3. Mat-making/ busket-weaving
4. Share Cropping	4. Selling milk	4. Carpentry
5. Agricultural/ Wage labour	5. Kitchen garden	5. Saw-work
6. Exchange labour*	6. Gathering forest products	6. House-building
7. Pasturing/Fodder collection	7. Collecting fuel consumption	7. Working as driver's assistant
8. Collecting fuel for sale	8. Liquor brewing	8. Sub-Contractor
9. Cutting bamboo for sale	9. Weaving	9. Homoeopathy practice
10. Cutting Sungrass for sale	10. Sewing for earning income	10. Kabiraji practice
11. Fishing	11. Husking	11. Business
12. Carrying products in the market		
13. Selling products the market.		
14. Private tuition		
15. Service		

[Note : *Exchange labour means labour use on reciprocal basis. for this kind of exchange labour, no payments of money have to be made.]

Economic Participation of Women : An Inter-tribe Analysis

Our field study reveals that economic participation of tribal women is greater in the villages where both jhum and settled cultivations are practised than that in the villages where jhum is no longer a source of livelihood. But this does not mean that tribal women are not participating in economic activities where settled cultivation is the mainstay of living. It is found that tribal women of all the villages under our study are involved in economic activities irrespective of jhum or settled cultivation. Tables-IV. 11 and IV. 12 present a comparative picture of work participation rates of women of different tribal groups of the selected villages.

Taking tribe-wise participation rate of women in four selected tribal villages, the Riang women with 53.19 per cent are at the top followed by the Jamatia women with 50.90 per cent and the Mog women with 49.38 per cent, while the Tripuri women with 46.95 per cent are at the bottom. In this connection it may be recalled that the Census data of 1981 shows highest participation rate (32.45 per cent) for the Jamatia women and lowest (26.7 per cent) for the Mog women among these four tribal groups in rural areas of Tripura.

If the age-specific participation rates among the tribal women in the age group 15 to 59 are taken into account separately, it is found that, among the Riangs almost all adult women are involved in one economic activity or the other. In this age group economic participation rates of women among other three tribal groups appear very similar and not below 80 per cent in any case.

Our field study reveals that out of 33 Riang households 13 depend exclusively on jhum and the remaining households practise jhum as their subsidiary source of livelihood along with plough cultivation or wage labour. In the Jamatia village also jhum is practised as subsidiary occupation by almost all households. Evidences show that the jhum system could not exist without women's active participation[32]. The tradition of women's participation in jhum equally with men is found among the Riang and Jamatia households who practise jhum as primary source of livelihood. Among these two tribal groups, it is also noted that, the households who practise jhum as subsidiary or secondary source of living, it has been entirely left to the women, the men fully concentrating on permanent agriculture. Boserup (1970) also refers female farming with no male help except for felling trees predominated in the whole of Congo region, in large parts of South Africa and some parts of West Africa[33]. It is mostly the women who have to serve as exchange labourers in others' fields[34]. Exchange labour, which is called 'yagul khillaimani' in tribal parlance, means labour use on reciprocal basis. This exchange labour system which was very important in jhum cultivation earlier, now plays widespread role in settled cultivation in tribal villages as the household with small amount of land cannot afford labourers for cultivation. Participation of the Riang women and Jamatia women in economic activities are not only confined to jhum cultivation, but also extended to settled cultivation and many other income generating activities. Among the Riangs and Jamatias we found hardly any able-bodied women who were not involved in economic activities. In the Riang village and Jamatia village participation rates among women are higher than that among the women in

the Tripuri village and Mog village. In these villages the scope for women's participation in productive activities are greater than that in other two villages due to the prevalence of both jhum cultivation and wet cultivation. It is observed that pressure of work is also heavier on the Riang and Jamatia women. We have observed a non-stop working day for these women. A Jamatia woman said to the researcher that she found hardly any time even to visit her ailing cousin.

However, that does not mean that tribal women are not participating in economic activities in the villages where only settled cultivation is the way of living. The participation rates of women in the Tripuri and Mog villages, where only wet cultivation is being practised, substantiate their meaningful involvement in economic activities. Majority of the Tripuri and Mog women have been participating in wet-cultivation either on their family land or on others' farm as wage laboureres. In our Tripuri village it is found that the male members of some households are serving as government employees and in that case the responsibility of wet cultivation is left to the women. With the help of hired labour women have been managing their family farm efficiently. In some cases it is found that women themselves are not actively participating in the field work but only supervising and managing the whole process. In these cases women have too much work in and around the house - taking care of pigs, poultry, drying pady, cleaning and storing rice, weaving, brewing liquor etc. in addition to tasks like cooking, cleaning and fetching water. Saradamani (1991) also found many tribal women who did not do any work in the fields[35]. Perhaps it is the result of the penetration of the non-tribal culture

among the Tripuri elites which restricts their women to participate in manual work in the field. Women of these households neither collect fuel nor gather wild-roots from nearby hillocks. The younger females of these households, however, tend to go up for education so that they can join the service sector of the economy or take up more prestigious occupation later on.

But the trend of this change has yet to cover all the emerging tribal middle class households within the same tribe and among different tribal groups. We have found a Tripuri woman working in the field although she is the wife of a school teacher. A girl of class IX is also found in the field transplanting along with her mother. Among the Mogs also we have found women of better-off families working in the fields.

The tribal women of landless households are usually unable to participate without being offered a wage-based work. Problem of landlessness is one of the major causes of lower participation rate of women among the Tripuris and Mogs. In many cases tribal males prefer to look after their own agricultural land and send their women to work in other's fields. This clearly indicates the male domination in the tribal society. Majority of tribal women have no ownership of any productive asset. The main means of production are their physical labour.

In our tribal villages, particularly in the Tripuri village Herma and in the Mog village Mahamuni, it is observed that sometimes women constitute a 'reserve army' of 'intermittent' labour[36] in agriculture. They get employment during peak agricultural season like sowing, transplanting and harvesting. This feature of women's employment is

not unique in the tribal economy of Tripura. In Asian agriculture, children, adult women, and the old constitute a 'reserve army' or 'intermittent workers' whereas adult men constitute the regular workforce[37].

Thus it is found that, the women of all the four tribal groups are participating in economic activities althouth the degree of participation varies in accordance with opportunity to participate.

Economic Participation of Tribal and Non-Tribal Women : A Comparative Analysis

A comparative analysis of women's participation in economic activities in tribal communities requires an understanding of economic and socio-cultural factors influencing the wider society. In the Indian context, traditional upper class/caste norms of excluding women from manual labour outside family acts as a barrier for their participation in economic activities[38]. Ability to keep women away from manual labour has been regarded as an important distinguishing mark of socio-economic status for the family[39]. Therefore, with improvement in economic condition women workers tend to withdraw from outdoor work in agriculture and allied activities[40]. It is due to this socio-cultural norms that very few women are found working outside home in our surveyed non-tribal village Daksin Charilam Madhyapara. Non-tribal women feel shy to take part in agricultural activities in the fields. The women who work in the fields as helper to the male cultivators or as wage labourers are either from poor landless households or from poor female-headed households.

A comparative picture of economic participation of

tribal and non-tribal women is portrayed in the following tables. Before discussing these tables it should be made clear that for a comparative analysis of economic participation of tribal and non-tribal women, four tribal groups under our study are clubbed together at the time of estimating work participation rate and observing participation rate in different groups according to age and marital status.

Table - IV. 13 shows that the proportion of non-tribal female workers to total non-tribal population of Daksin Charilam is far below that of their tribal sisters. It is only 8.3 per cent for non-tribal women whereas it is found to be 23.55 percent for tribal women. Not only that, the proportion of non-tribal women workers to total workers of their social group is about half of that for the tribals (Table-IV. 14). Again, if we compare the participation rate of non-tribal women with that of tribal women it is found that for non-tribal women it is only 19.42 per cent while for tribal women it is 49.9 per cent (Table-IV. 15). The figure improves if we take the age group 15 to 59 separately, but in that case also difference between tribal and non-tribal women comes to be more glaring, which is shown by Table-IV. 16.

Male - female difference in participation is also much higher among the non-tribals than that among the tribals. Theses differences are substantiated by Tables-IV. 17 to IV. 20.

A comparative study of age-wise distribution of tribal and non-tribal workers shows that, working age for non-tribal women ranges between 20 and 54 while for tribal women working age ranges between 13 and 65 plus.

Among the non-tribal we have hardly found any woman as worker of age below 20 above 54. The modal age group appear to be 25-44 for both tribal and non-tribal women workers.

While looking into the marital status of tribal and non-tribal women workers, it is observed that, like the tribal women workers, the proportion of married women workers is also high among the non-tribal women workers. No married woman worker of age below 22 is reported among the non-tribals of Daksin Charilam. The proportion of unmarried women workers among the non-tribal women workers is lower than that among the tribal women workers. It is because of the fact that agriculture and allied activities are the main source of employment for rural women; and unmarried women among the non-tribals rarely participate in agricultural activities outside home. In Daksin Charilam, no unmarried woman is found working in the fields. Only two unmarried women workers are found in our non-tribal village. One of them is engaged in biri-work and the other in government service. The proportion of widows among the non-tribal women workers is higher than that among the tribal women workers.

Our study reveals that in a year, non-tribal women work for 4.5 hours per day on an average which is very similar to their tribal sisters. Invisibility of work does not lead to shorter hours of work for non-tribal women workers. Apart from economic activities they devote longer hours in household activities and child care than their tribal counterparts.

Findings of our study of non-tribal village Daksin Charilam suggest that, in similar economic condition non-

tribal women's participation in economic activities is much less than that of their tribal sisters. Data collected by Indian Agro-Economic Research Centre also reveal that tribal women are usually more willing to participate in work than non-tribal women[41]. Our Census data also show that tribal women's work participation rate is higher than that of non-tribal women in Tripura which we have discussed in the preceding chapter. But the difference between the Census observation and our observation lies in the fact that female participation rate among the non-tribals of Daksin Charilam is much higher than is suggested by the Census figures.

In the non-tribal village society of Tripura, particularly in our surveyed non-tribal village, non-participation in manual work outside home is still considered as a value and it is due to this reason that there is much 'invisibility' in non-tribal women's work as most of them do not work in the fields. Also, because of their heavy commitment to household activities and child care, these women are usually inclined to participate only in those agricultural activities which can be more easily combined with child care and household chores. Some forms of agricultural work, such as boiling and drying paddy, supervising and participating in threashing work done in their yeards, cleaning and storing rice can be fitted between domestic obligations. They are engaged in cleaning the cow-sheds, feeding and milking the cows, taking care of poultry and duckery, making puffed rice, doing biri-work and cane work etc. But these indoor economic activities done by the non-tribal women are looked as extension of their household work and these women are not categorised as 'workers' in the official statistics.

Among the non-tribal women very few women are found working in the fields outside home even on their own family land. One of our respondents who is a widow is found working on her family land very early in the morning so that nobody can trace that she is working in the field and she is found very shy of admitting this to us. In the tribal village Mahamuni, another woman is found working with her husband in the paddy field. When we asked about her work, her husband reponded to our query that his wife often used to come to the field for some minor help in agricultural work. About regular working of non-tribal women, their replies were 'we do not have the habit of working outside'. In the non-tribal village women take part in manual labour only when it is difficult to meet both ends by husband's income alone.

However, it is observed that like tribal women, non-tribal women of poor households have also a less relaxed life. But difference is that, it is the need for survival rather than social ethos which compels non-tribal women to take part in economic activities. It is true that in the tribal world women contribute to the working force in a more substantial way than in the non-tribal world.

Factors Contributing to High Rate of Economic Participation of Tribal Women

Our study reveals that, in tribal villages women have been playing a very significant role in the village economy. It is found that tribal men and women have been participating in economic activities almost equally. In our Jamatia village, women's participation rate is higher than that of men. In view of the importance of tribal women's participation in economic activities we must try to identify

the factors determining it. These are discussed below.

a) The ethnic background does not become a bar to tribal women's participation in economic activities. In our tribal villages agriculture is the main source of employment for women and they do not feel shy to take part in agricultural activities in the fields.

In contrast, socio-cultural norms restrict non-tribal women to take part in manual labour outside home.

b) Participation of tribal women in economic activities is facilitated by the method of organisation of agricultural work in jhum cultivation. We have already noted that labour is the strategic factor of production in jhuming. Usually all members of the family of workable age participate in jhum. But in our selected villages where jhum is practised either as primary or as subsidiary source of living, it is found that in some cases, jhum is managed primarily by women in addition to their work in settled cultivation.

c) In our surveyed villages settled cultivation is not yet mechanised and hence depends mainly on labour-intensive methods. Tribal women are participating in almost all activities related to settled cultivation except ploughing. Uprooting of seedlings, transplantation. weeding etc. place heavy demand on tribal women.

On the other hand, non-tribal women participate mostly in post-harvest activities which can be done within the four-walls of home.

d) Because of the uneconomic size of holding of their households and also because of acute problems of

landlessness, tribal women are pushed to work as wage earners for survival.

e) It is also found that, sometimes tribal women participate more intensively in economic activities to compensate the low participation rate among men.

f) Tribal women are preferred by the non-tribal land-owners of the adjacent villages as agricultural labourers because they are hard-working and very sincere to work.

g) Another factor which raises further the participation rate of tribal women is their participation in other subsistence activities such as, gathering forest products, collecting fuel, fishing etc. round the year and particularly in lean season. We consider these as economic activities. Tribal men usually do not participate in such activities.

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Table - IV. 3

Percentage of Tribal and Non-Tribal Male and Female Workers to Total Tribal and Non-Tribal Workers respectively in the five Villages Under Study

Village	Tribal Non-tribal Group	Total Number of Workers	Total Number of of Male Workers	Percentage of Male Workers to Total Workers	Total Number of Female Workers	Percentage of Female Worker to Total Workers
Herma	Tripuri	119	65	54.62	54	45.38
Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para	Riang	104	54	51.92	50	48.08
Natun Dewanbari	Jamitia	108	52	48.15	56	51.85
Mahamuni	Mog	93	53	57.00	40	43.00
Daksin Charilam Madhyapara	Bengali	86	66	76.74	20	23.26

Source : Field Survey

Table - IV. 4

Percentage of Tribal and Non-Tribal Male and Female Workers to Total Tribal and Non-Tribal Populations respectively in five Villages Under Study

Village	Tribal Non-tribal Group	Total Population of All Age Group	Number of of Male Workers	Percentage of Male Workers to Total Population of All Age Group	Number of Female Workers	Percentage of Female Worker to Total Population of All Age Group
Herma	Tripuri	241	65	26.97	54	22.41
Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para	Riang	192	54	28.12	50	26.04
Natun Dewanbari	Jamitia	233	52	22.31	56	24.03
Mahamuni	Mog	183	53	28.96	40	21.86
Daksin Charilam Madhyapara	Bengali	241	66	27.38	20	8.3

Source : Field Survey

Table - IV. 5

Percentage of Tribal and Non-Tribal Male and Female Workers to Tribal and Non-Tribal Populations in the age Group 15-59 five Villages Under Study

Village	Tribe Non-tribal Group	Population in the Age Group 15 to 59	Total Number of of Male Workers in the Age Group 15 to 59	Percentage of Male Workers to Total Population in the Age Group 15 to 59	Total Number of Female Workers in the Age Group 15 to 59	Percentage of Female Workers to Total Population in the Age Group 15 to 59
Herma	Tripuri	127	57	44.88	48	37.8
Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para	Riang	98	45	45.91	44	44.9
Natun Dewanbari	Jamatia	131	46	35.11	53	40.46
Mahamuni	Mog	101	47	46.53	37	36.63
Daksin Charilam Madhyapara	Bengali	148	62	41.89	20	13.51

Source : Field Survey

Table - IV. 6

Work Participation Rates of Tribal Men and Women in four Selected Tribal Villages

Village	Tribe	Total Male Population of All Age Groups	Total Number of of Male Workers in All Age Groups	Percentage of Male Workers to Total Male Population in All Age Groups	Total Female Population of All Age Groups	Number of Female Workers in All Age Groups	Percentage of Female Worker to Total Population in All Age Groups
Herma	Tripuri	126	65	51.58	115	54	46.95
Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para	Riang	98	54	55.10	94	50	53.19
Natun Dewanbari	Jamatia	123	52	42.27	110	56	50.90
Mahamuni	Mog	101	53	52.47	82	40	48.78

Source : Field Survey

Table - IV. 7

Work Participation Rates of Tribal Men and Women in the Age Group 15 to 59 in four Selected Tribal Villages

Village	Tribe	Total Male Population in the Age Group 15 to 59	Total Number of of Male Workers in the Age Group 15 to 59	Percentage of Male Workers to Total Male Population in the Age Group 15 to 59	Total Female Population in the Age Group 15 to 59	Number of Female Workers in the Age Group 15 to 59	Percentage of Female Worker to Total Population in the Age Group 15 to 59
Herma	Tripuri	67	57	85.07	60	48	80
Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para	Riang	53	45	84.90	45	44	97.8
Natun Dewanbari	Jamatia	66	46	69.7	65	53	81.53
Mahamuni	Mog	56	47	83.92	45	37	82.22

Source : Field Survey

Table - IV. 8

Distribution of Male and Female Workers by age in the Survey Villages

Village and Tribe	Herma Tripuri				Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para Riang			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
Age Group	No of Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	No of Workers	P. C. To Total Workers	No. of Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	No. of Workers	P. C. to Total Workers
10-14	1	1.53	1	1.85	Nil	Nil	2	4.
15-19	Nil	Nil	2	3.70	5	9.26	8	16.
20-24	6	9.23	9	16.67	3	5.55	6	12.
25-44	37	56.94	25	46.31	24	44.45	21	42.
45-54	10	15.38	11	20.37	9	16.67	7	14.
55-59	4	6.16	1	1.85	4	7.40	2	4.
60-64	1	1.53	3	5.55	2	3.70	3	6.
65 +	6	9.23	2	3.70	7	12.97	1	2.
Total	65	100.00	54	100.00	54	100.00	50	100.00

Table - IV. 8 (Contd.)

Village and Tribe	Natun Dewanbari Jamatia				Mahamuni Mog			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
Age Group	No of Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	No of Workers	P. C. To Total Workers	No. of Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	No. of Workers	P. C. to Total Workers
10-14	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	2.5
15-19	1	1.92	6	10.71	4	7.54	4	10
20-24	6	11.55	7	12.5	8	15.09	8	20
25-44	28	53.84	30	53.57	25	47.18	16	40
45-54	9	17.31	7	12.5	7	13.21	7	17.5
55-59	2	3.84	3	5.36	3	5.66	2	5
60-64	3	5.77	Nil	NIl	3	5.66	2	5
65 +	3	5.77	3	5.36	3	5.66	Nil	Nil
Total	52	100.00	56	100.00	53	100.00	40	100.00

Source : Field Survey

Table-IV. 9

Distribution of Tribal Women Workers by Marital Status in the Selected Tribal Villages

Village & Tribe	Herma Tripuri						Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para Riang					
Age Group	Married	Unmarried	Widowed	Divorced	Deserted	Total Workers	Married	Unmarried	Widowed	Divroced	Deserted	Total Workes
10-14	1					1		2				2
15-19	1	1				2	2	6				8
20-24	8	1				9	6					6
25-44	24		1			25	20	1				21
45-54	9		1	1		11	7					7
55-59	1					1	2					2
60-64	3					3	3					3
65 +	2					2	1					1
Total	49	2	2	1		54	41	9				50
Percentage to Total Workers	90.74	3.70	3.70	1.85		100.00	82	18				100.00

Table-IV. 9 (Contd.)

Village & Tribe	Natun Dewanbari Jamatia						Mahamuni Mog				
Age Group	Married	Unmarried	Widowed	Divorced	Deserted	Total Workers	Married	Unmarried	Widowed	Divorced	Deserted	Total Workes
10-14							1					1
15-19		6				6		4				4
20-24	3	4				7	6	2				8
25-44	27	1	1		1	30	15	1	1			17
45-54	7					7	6					6
55-59	3					3	2					2
60-64							2					2
65 +	3					3						
Total	43	11	1		1	56	32	7	1			40
Percentage to Total Workers	78.57	17.86	1.78		1.78	100.00	80	17.5	2.5			100.00

Source : Field Survey

Table-IV. 10

Average Houes of Work of Tribal Men and Women Per Day in Four Selected villages

Village	Tribe	Average Hours of Work per Day	
		Men	Women
Herma	Tripuri	4.6	4.5
Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para	Riang	4.5	5.0
Natun Dewanbari	Jamatia	4.0	5.2
Mahamuni	Mog	4.6	4.3

Source : Field Survey

Table-IV. 11

Work Participation Rates of Women among Four Tribal Groups in the Selected Villages

Village	Tribe	Number of Female Workers of All Age	Percentage of Female Workers to Total Females of All Age	Number of Female Workers in Age 15-59	Percentage of Female Workers to Total Females in Age 15-59
Herma	Tripuri	54	46.95	48	80.0
Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para	Riang	50	53.19	44	97.8
Natun Dewanbari	Jamatia	56	50.90	53	81.53
Mahamuni	Mog	40	48.78	37	82.22

Source : Field Survey

Table - IV. 12

Tribe-wise Work Participation Rates of Women in Different Age-Group in four selected villages

Village and Tribe	Herma		Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para		Natun Dewanbari		Mahamuni	
	Tripuri		Riang		Jamatia		Mog	
Age Group	No of Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	No of Workers	P. C. To Total Workers	No. of Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	No. of Workers	P. C. to Total Workers
10-14	1	1.85	2	4	Nil	Nil	1	2.5
15-19	2	3.70	8	16	6	10.71	4	10
20-24	9	16.67	6	12	7	12.5	8	20
25-44	25	46.31	21	42	30	53.57	16	40
45-54	11	20.37	7	14	7	12.5	7	17.5
55-59	1	1.85	2	4	3	5.36	2	5
60-64	3	5.55	3	6	Nil	Nil	2	5
65 +	2	3.70	1	2	3	5.36	Nil	Nil
Total	54	100.00	50	100.00	56	100.00	40	100.00

Source : Field Survey

Table-IV. 13
Percentages of Tribal and Non-tribal Women Workers to Total Tribal and Non-Tribal Population in the Selected Villages

Village	Social Group	Total Population	Number of Female Workers	Percentage of Female Worker to Total Population
Herma, Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para, Natun Dewanbari and Mahamuni (four tribal villages taken together)	Tribal	849	200	23.55
Daksin Charilam Madhyapara	Non-Tribal	241	20	8.3

Source : Field Survey

Table-IV. 14

Percentages of Tribal and Non-tribal Women Workers to Total Tribal and Non-Tribal Workers in the Selected Villages

Village	Social Group	Total Workers	Number of Female Workers	Percentage of Female Worker to Total Workers
Herma, Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para, Natun Dewanbari and Mahamuni (four tribal villages taken together)	Tribal	424	200	47.17
Daksin Charilam Madhyapara	Non-Tribal	86	20	23.26

Source : Field Survey

Table-IV. 15

Work Participation Rates of Tribal and Non-Tribal Women in the Selected Villages

Village	Social Group	Total Female Population of All Age Group	Number of Female Workers of All Age Groups	Percentage of Female Worker to Total Female Population of All Age Groups
Herma, Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para, natun Dewanbari and Mahamuni (four villages taken together)	Tribal (four tribes clubed together)	401	200	49.9
Daksin Charilam Madhyapara	Non-Tribal	103	20	19.42

Source : Field Survey

Table-IV. 16

Age-Specific Work Participation Rates of Tribal and Non-Tribal Women in the Age Group 15-59 in the Selected Villages

Village	Social Group	Total Female Population in the Age group 15-59	Number of Female Workers in the Age Group 15-59	Percentage of Female Worker to Total Female Population in the Age Group 15-59
Herma, Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para, natun Dewanbari and Mahamuni (four villages taken together)	Tribal	215	182	84.65
Daksin Charilam Madhyapara	Non-Tribal	63	20	31.74

Source : Field Survey

Table-IV. 17

Percentages of Tribal Male and Female Workers to Total Tribal Population and Percentages of Non-tribal Male and Female Workers to Total Non-tribal Population in the Surveyed Villages

Village	Social Group	Male	Female
Herma, Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para, Natun Dewanbari and Mahamuni (four tribal villages taken together)	Tribal	26.38	23.55
Daksin Charilam Madhyapara	Non-Tribal	27.38	8.3

Table-IV. 18

Percentages of Tribal Male and Female Workers to Total Tribal Workers and Percentages of Non-tribal Male and Female Workers to Total Non-tribal workers in the Surveyed Villages

Village	Social Group	Male	Female
Herma, Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para, Natun Dewanbari and Mahamuni (four tribal villages taken together)	Tribal	52.83	47.17
Daksin Charilam Madhyapara	Non-Tribal	76.74	23.26

Source : Field Survey

Table-IV.19

Work Participation Rates of Tribal and Non-Tribal Men and Women in the Selected Villages (All Age Group)

Village	Social Group	Total Male Popu-lation	Number of Male Workers	Percentage of Male workers to total male Population	Total Female Popula-tion	Number of Female Workers	Percentage of Female workers to total Female Population
Herma, Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para, Natun Dewanbari and Mahamuni (four tribal villages taken together)	Tribal	448	224	50.	401	200	49.9
Daksin Charilam Madhyapara	Non-tribal	138	66	47.82	103	20	19.42

Source : Field Survey

Table-IV.20

Age-Specific Participation Rates of Tribal and Non-Tribal Men and Women in the Age group 15 to 59 in Selected Tribal and Non-Tribal Villages Under Study

Village	Social Group	Total Male Population in the Age group 15-59	Number of Male workers in the age group, 15-59	Percentage of Male workers to total Male Population in the age group, 15-59	Total Female population in the age group 15-59	Number of Female workers in the Age group, 15-59	Percentage of Female workers to Total Female Population in the Age group 15-59
Herma, Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para, Natun Dewanbari and Mahamuni	Tribal	242	195	80.58	215	182	84.65
Daksin Charilam Madhyapara	Non-tribal	85	66	77.65	63	20	31.74

Source : Field Survey

Table - IV.21

Distribution of Tribal and Non-tribal Female Workers by Age in the Selected Villages

	Tribal (four tribes together)		Non-Tribal	
Age Group	Number of Workers	Percentage to Total Workers	Number of Workers	Percentage to TotalWorkers
13-14	4	2.0	Nil	Nil
15-19	20	10.0	Nil	Nil
20-24	30	15.0	2	10.0
25-44	92	46.0	11	55.0
45-54	32	16.0	7	35.0
55-59	8	4.0	Nil	Nil
60-64	8	4.0	Nil	Nil
65+	6	3.0	Nil	Nil
Total	200	100.00	20	100.00

Source : Field survey

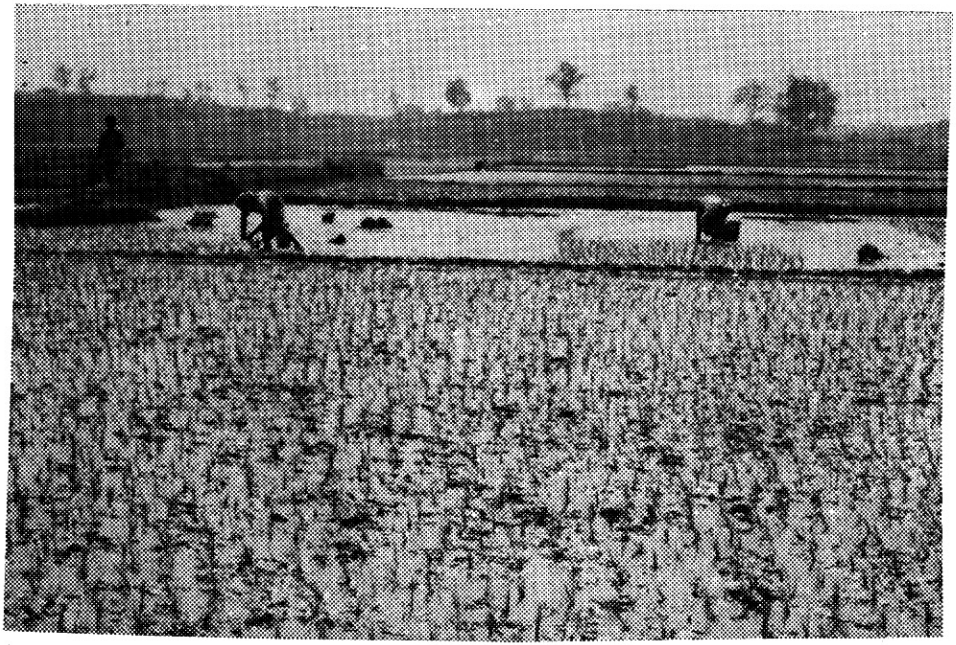
Table-IV- 22

Marital status of Tribal and Non-Tribal Women Workers of Surveyed Villages (in percentage)

Social group	Total	Married	Unmarried	Widow	Divorced	Deserted
Tribal	100.00	82.5	14.5	2.0	0.5	0.5
Non-tribal	100.00	75.0	10.0	15.0	Nil	Nil

Source : Field Survey

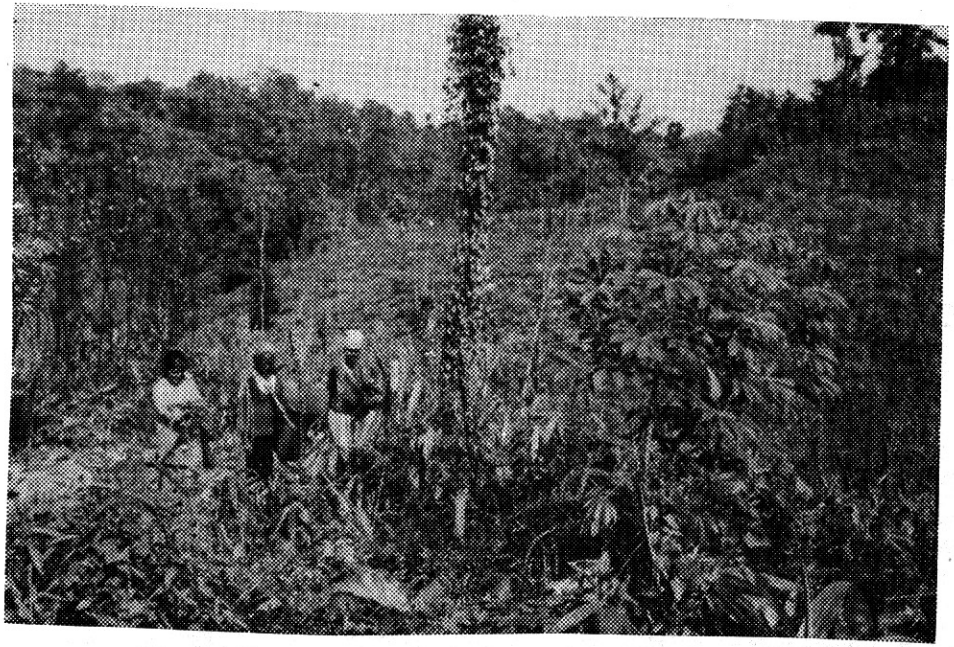
Tripuri women in transplantation, Hermabari, W. Tripura



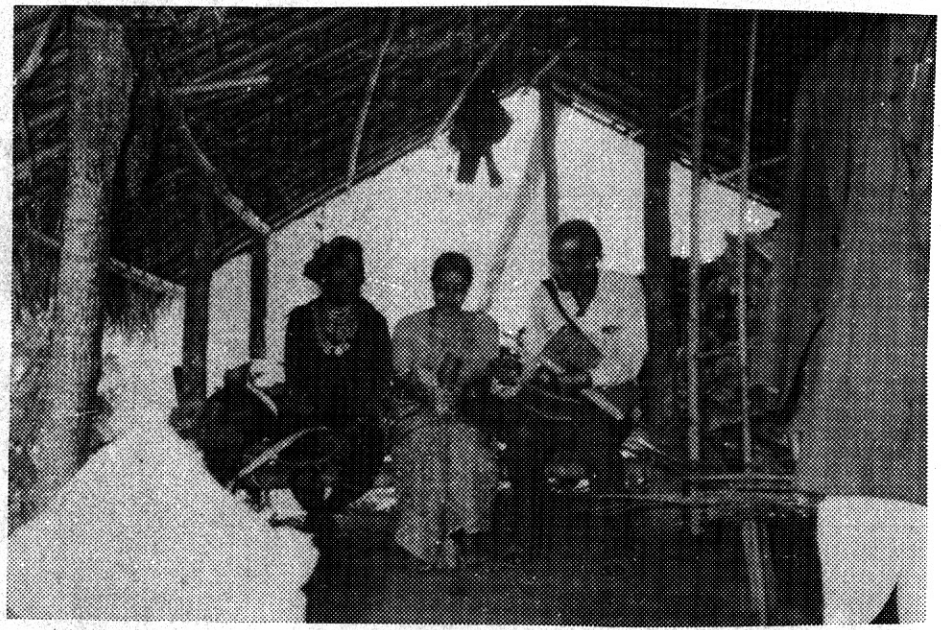
Tripuri man and women in transplantation, Hermabari, W. Tripura

Tripuri woman at work, Hermabari, W. Tripura

Tripuri woman in search of fuel, Raibari, Turmachhara, South Tripura.



The writer in front of a Riang Couple collecting sesamum in jhum, Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para, South Tripura.



A Riang women worker along with the wariter and Kumud Kundu Choudhury in jhum, Binoy Prasad Choudhury para, S. Tripura.

Riang man and women collecting bamboo and fuel for sale, Raibari, Turmachhara, S. Tripura.

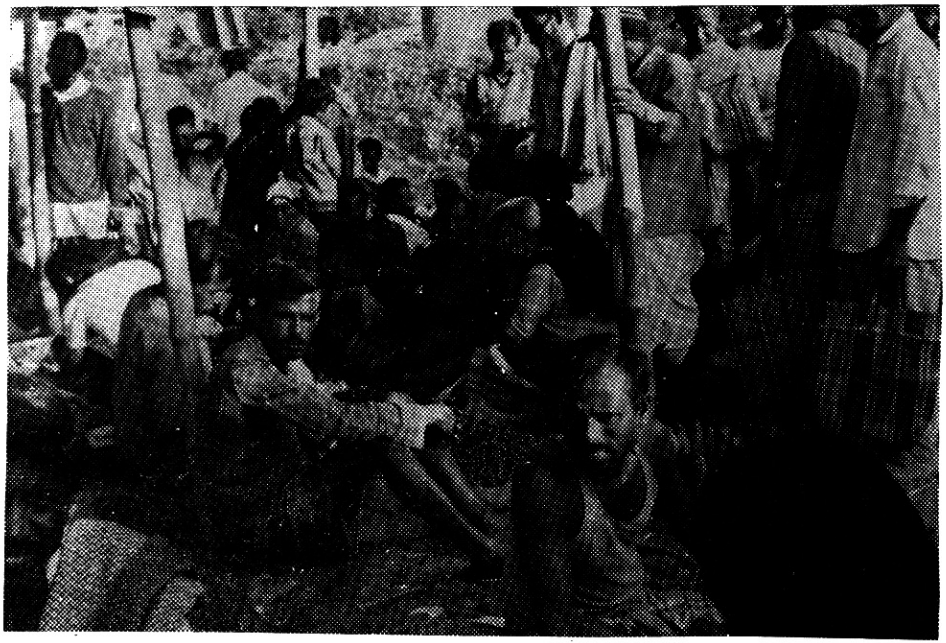
Jamatia man and women cutting jhum, Natun Dewanbari, S. Tripura.

A Jamatia woman preparing 'Cheeak', Natun Dewanbari, S. Tripura.

Jamatia woman worker along with her daughter wasting jute, Natun Dewanbari, S. Tripura.

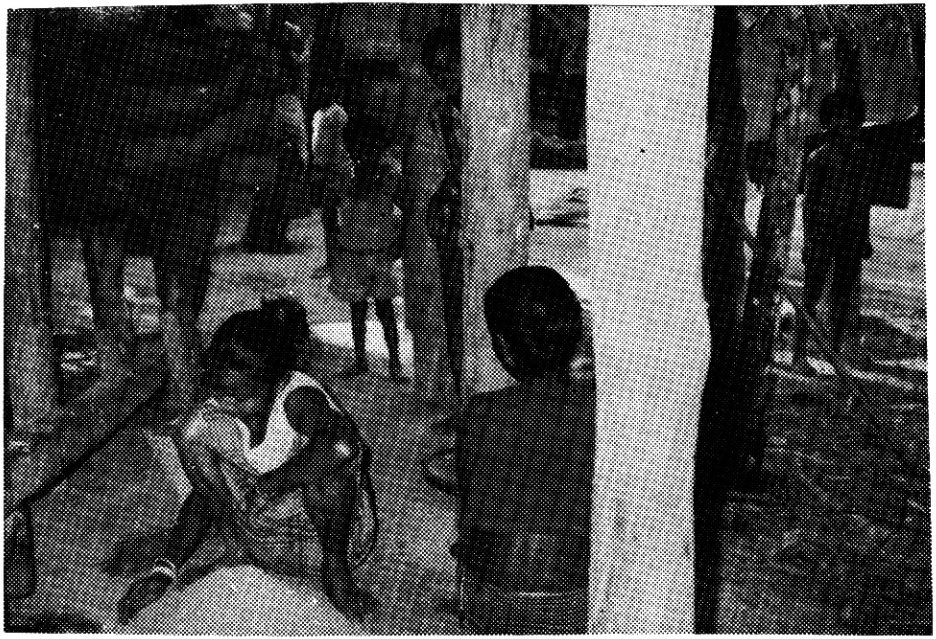
Jamatia woman worker along with her daughter wasting jute, Natun Dewanbari, S. Tripura.

Jamatia women selling their produce, Pitra Bazar, S. Tripura.



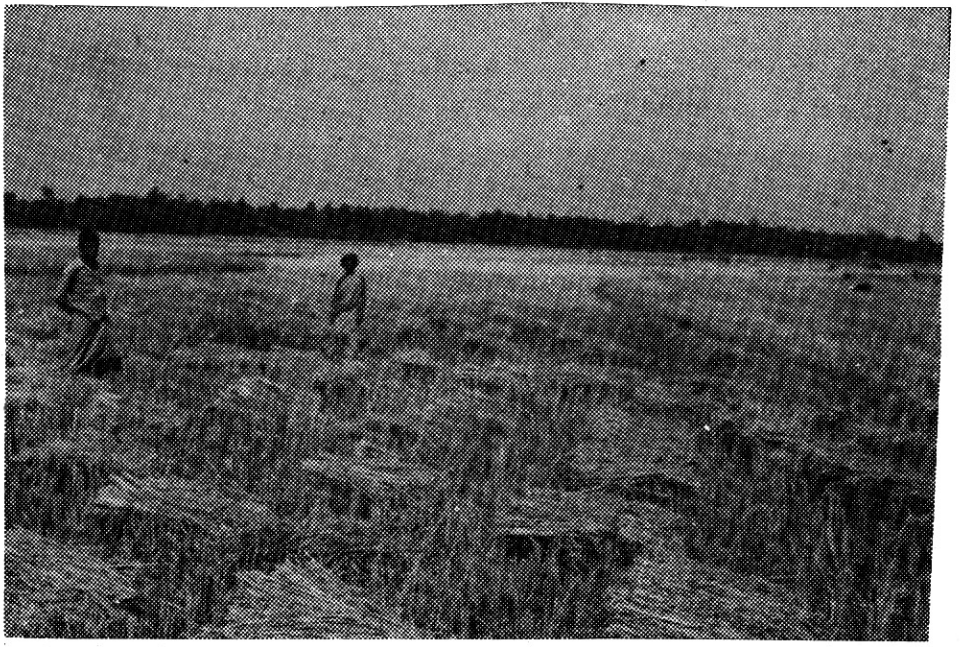
Tribal women and Non-tribal men selling commodities, Pitra Bazar, S. Tripura.

Tribal and Non-tribal women workers, Natun Dewanbari, S. Tripura.



Mog women husking rice, Mahamuni, S. Tripura.

Non-tribal women in Threshing paddy in a tribal house, Mahamuni, S. Tripura.



A Non-tribal couple harvesting paddy, Mahamuni, S. Tripura.

CHAPTER V

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF RURAL TRIBAL WOMEN OF TRIPURA (as Revealed from the Field Study) _ QUALITATIVE ASPECTS

In the preceding chapter we have been mainly concerned with quantitative aspects of economic participation of rural tribal women of Tripura. We have made attempts to find out participation rates of tribal women and to compare them with various other groups of workers including the tribal males. The main focus of our study there was to provide comparative measurement of the efforts and contribution made by rural tribal women.

However, for an indepth understanding of the tribal women's economic role and status in the society mere analysis of quantitative aspects like participation rates, time spent etc. are not enough. It is necessary to examine the pattern of women's economic involvement in order to know where they stand in socio-economic framework to which they belong. It is also necessary to analyse the distribution of tribal women workers among different socio-economic strata. Moreover, relation between literacy and work participation has also to be examined. A detailed study of the qualitative aspect will also facilitate to grasp the extent of economic progress attained by the target group of our study.

In short, while analysis of participation rates in the preceding chapter has afforded a view of the extent of economic participation, the present chapter will unfold its nature, thus acquainting us with the degree of welfare attained by tribal women workers through their tireless

efforts. This view of the problem can not be revealed by quantitative analysis alone. Hence, the present chapter is guided as a supplement to preceding chapter to have complete view of the problem of the study.

Occupational Pattern and Economic Participation

Men do not live by bread alone; but the need to make a living requires the sustained effort of a very substantial proportion of the population in all societies. Moreover, the way this living is made largely determines the general social and economic position of the worker and his or her family. The classification of workers by occupation and industry provides a major measure for any comparative analysis of the stage of economic development reached by different societies as well as an index of regional differences within a given country[1]. Now, to get an idea about the level of development of the tribal women compared to other groups of women including tribal men, an attempt has been made to study their occupational structure.

In tribal villages it is observed that one person is engaged in more than one occupations[2] and more than one member of the same family are engaged in non-agricultural occupations also. Usually one form of activity is not sufficient to guarantee the survival but a combination of several is required - for example jhuming and wage labour, or settled cultivation and wage labour etc. For simplicity in analysing occupational pattern, village level activities, shown earlier in CHAPTER -IV, CHART - 1, have been categorised into ten group as follows :

(I) Wet cultivation, (II) Jhum cultivation, (III), Agriculture/Wage labour work, (IV) Cattle-rearing/Poultry/

Duckery, (V) Household industry, (VI) Liquor making, (VII) Other subsistence activities, (VIII) Other non-agricultural activities, (IX) Petty business and (X) Service.

Of these ten categories, (I) and (II) imply working in own cultivation. Work in share - cropping is also included in category (I). These two categories imply self- employment activities and women's participation in such activities are often overlooked as women sometimes combine their farm work with domestic activities, and the distinction between the two is not always clear. Category (III) represents wage- earning activities which are considered as work in all economic surveys. Category (IV) include cattle-rearing, poultry and duckery which are mainly women's tasks. In category (V) household industry includes weaving, mat-making, basketry, cane-work etc. Work in category (VI) seems clear. We have not included liquor brewing in household industry category to show the extent of participation in this activity as primary occupation. Work in category (VII), that is, in other subsistence activities include gathering forest products, fuel collection, fishing, pasturing, fodder collection, food processing, which are mostly done by women to supplement the subsistence of their families. These works also are not considered as work by the Census estimation. By non-agricultural activities, Category (VIII), we mean carpentry work, saw-work, mud-work, making and repairing agricultural implements, sewing for earning income, homoeopathy and kabiraji practices, work as sub-contractor or as driver's assistant, private tuition, cutting and selling bamboo, sun-grass etc. Categories IX and X seem to be self expressed by their headings. With these broad divisions of village-level activities, attempt has been made to analyse

the occupational pattern of tribal women. In analysing occupational pattern comparisons have been made between tribal men and women of four selected tribes, comparisons have also been made between tribal and non-tribal women.

Occupational pattern of Tribal Men and Women

Table- V.1 shows the distribution of tribal men and women of the selected tribal villages according to their principal occupations. By Principal occupation we mean the occupation or activity in which a person is engaged for the greater part of a year and Table-V.2 shows the distribution of tribal men and women according to some of their important subsidiary occupations.

Table-V.1 shows that, except for the Tripuri men, agriculture is the predominant occupation for majority of the tribal men and women in the selected villages. Among the Tripuris and Jamatias, more women than men are engaged in wet cultivation. Kosambi (1989) described woman as first agriculturist[3]. Women were engaged in agricultural activities and men in hunting occupations. However, jhum is no longer practised by the Tripuris and Mogs. Until recent years Tripuris of village Herma had been practising jhum in near-by hillocks which is now converted into Rangmala Punarbasan Colony for 100 landless Tripuri households. The Riangs and Jamatias have been practising jhum till today either as primary occupation or as secondary occupation to supplement their means of survival. The entire Riang population of Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para may be classed as agriculturists. In 1912 Shakespear (1983) observed the entire Lushai population as agriculturists[4]. Among the Riangs, thirteen households are found exclusively jhumia

households who do not own land. In jhum cultivation, the proportion of women worker is higher than that of men among the Riangs and Jamatias. Kosambi (1989) found shifting cultivation as the monopoly of women among the most primitive tribes[5]. In some cases it is found that in the same family man is engaged in wet cultivation on family land while woman's principal occupation is jhuming. Again, in some cases jhum is managed by the female members of the household without any male help. This implies that primitive cultivation, not so productive as cultivation with a plough, rests with women[6].

It may be observed in Table-V.1 that among the Tripuris and Mogs, the proportion of agricultural labourers is more among women than that among men. The Census data also suggest the similar pattern in this respect for the Tripuri and Mog women.The proportion of agricultural labourers among the Mog females is not only higher than that among the Mog males, it is also much higher than that among the males and females of all the other three tribal groups. These facts indicate acute landlessness among these two tribes and show that its incidence is more on women than on men. In some cases,it is also observed that the women belonging to the households possessing little land have taken the work of agricultural labourers as their principal occupation while men concentrate on the cultivation of family lands. Similar pattern can also be observed in other regions of India as well as are other third world countries[6]. Again, tribal men of some land-poor households have taken non-agricultural occupations while their women have joined the ranks of agricultural labourers. Among the Jamatias and Riangs the proportion of male agricultural labourers is slightly higher vis-a-vis

the females. This is because of the fact that among these two tribes women of land- poor households have been participating in jhuming and other petty activities.

Among the Riangs two types of agricultural labourers are found. They are casual labourers, both male and female, and hired attached labourers. Casual labourers undertake a specific agricultural operation, such as ploughing or harvesting on daily wage basis almost everywhere. But hired attached labourers are employed for a year at a time and perform agricultural and and non-agricultural, as well as domestic,work for the employer. They are paid Rs.300.00 in several irregular instalments and food and dress during the contract period. These labourers are found fully dependent on one particular family for work so much so that in some respects the arrangement resembles bonded labour in terms of restrictions placed by the employer on their hired attached labourers' right to leave the work. We have faced much displeasure on the part of the employer at the time of interviewing these labourers. In our Riang village, no female worker is found among these labourers. Similar system of attached agricultural labour can be found in Gujarat[8]. In some areas of Gujarat the system is known as Hali system and as Kamia system in Chotanagpur[9].Our intention to note this is to point out the oppressive system which is still in vogue in many parts of India as well as in our Riang village.

However, in respect of non- agricultural employment tribal men are far ahead of tribal women. Among the Tripuris and Jamatias and to some extent among the Mogs, men have come forward to participate in non-agrocultural activities taking them as their principal

occupation. On the contrary, tribal women of the selected villages are found very rarely to take up non-agricultural occupations. Women, who do not or cannot participate in cultivation of any type or in agricultural labourer's work, have taken liquor-brewing for sale as their principal occupation. It is observed that among the tribal women liquor distillation is one of the avenues of earning as it has become more remunerative than spinning and weaving. Similar pattern of occupation can be observed among the Choudhris of Gujarat[10]. Some women spend long hours of the day for whole of the year in other subsistence activities like gathering forest products, collecting fuel, fishing for augmenting the real income of their families[11]. A Mog woman is found to participate in mud-work regularly with her husband. To our wonder, a Mog woman is found engaged in private tuition as her principal occupation, which is quite uncommon for a rural tribal woman.

Table-V. 1 shows that a good number of Tripuri men have been able to shift from agricultural occupations to services. The proportion of service-holders is greater than that of the proportion of cultivators among them. They are found serving as teachers, even as Headmaster in the local high school, and as government officials at Agartala, the capital town of the State. Among men and women of all the four tirbes under our study, largest participation in the tertiary sector is found for the Tripuri men.In the past also, among the various tribes, the tribe Tripuri had the highest social status[12]. This was presumably because it belonged to the ruling tribe of the territory.Also among the Jamatias and Mogs a considerable proportion of men is found in this sector. On the contrary, microscopic number of the Tripuri and Jamatia women in the service sector

indicate utter backwardness of tribal women in this respect. Both secondary and tertiary sectors remain almost beyond their reach. In the service sector tribal women are mainly placed in the job that require little skill and education and consequently, bring low remuneration.

Table-V.2 shows, jhum cultivation in one of the important subsidiary occupations for both men and women among the Riangs and Jamatias. Liquor making is found as the subsidiary occupation for the Tripuri,Riang and Jamatia women. Among the subsidiary occupations, weaving is also important for the women belonging to all the selected tribal groups. According to Kosambi, women were the first weavers[13]. As a traditional household industry weaving was once pure indigenous industry for the tribal women of Tripura[14]. They used to weave clothes like pachhra worn by women, ordinary loin cloth worn by men and jhum coat put on at the time of jhum work in their looms[15] to meet their family needs. Cotton was grown in abundant quantities in jhum, spinning and weaving was undertaken,dyeing was also done in almost all colours which were derived from the plants, herb and bark of trees. According to Somendra Chandra Deb Barma (1933),almost all the jhumia households in Tripura owned spinning wheel and loin loom and women used to produce beautiful clothes[16]. Tripura was once very famous for her Ria (breast cover)[17]. But now this traditional household industry has changed from indigenous industry to raw material base industry. Most of the tribal households cannot afford to purchase cotton yarns for weaving. Nowadays weaving is done by the tribal women occasionally just to retain the habit which is not even sufficient to meet their day-to-day need for clothes.Presently tribal people

are using more and more mill-made cloth even in rural areas. However, in the Riang village some women are found dyeing cotton yarns for weaving in beautiful colours which are derived from the plants. But in other three villages, women respondents told the researcher that they were to purchase cotton yarns from the market at high price if they wanted to weave. In many cases this traditional household industry of tribal women is replaced by liquor making which is more remunerative in recent times.

Our study on the occupational pattern of tribal men and women of the selected tribal groups under investigation reveals the fact that diversification of occupational pattern is not shared equally by all the four tribal groups. Again, if occupational diversification among a particular group of people is considered as a sign of development it is always the tribal men who are ahead of tribal women.

Occupational Pattern of Women of Four Tribes

As far as the occupational distribution is concerned the picture has not changed much for the tribal women of Tripura. Agricultural sector remains almost the only source of occupation for the tribal women of the selected villages under our sudy.

Table-V.3 shows the distribution of tribal women workers among the selected tribal groups according to their principal occupations.

It is observed that the proportion of persons engaged in wet cultivation is highest among the Jamatia women workers and it is lowest among the Riang women workers.

It has been noted earlier that jhum is practised by the Riangs and Jamatias till today.Jhuming is foumd as the principal occupation for majority of the Riang women workers and involvement of the Riang women in a significant proportion in jhum indicates their relative backwardness. On the other hand, as good as 62.5 per cent of the Jamatia women workers are engaged in settled cultivation. For tribals, a switch over from jhum cultivation to settled cultivation is undoubtedly a great development and in that sense the position of the Jamatia women workers is better than that of the Riang women.

Saigal(1978) described the Mogs as the most prosperous setted cultivators[18]. But a large proportion of agricultural labourers among the Mog women workers in the selected Mog village at present does not suggest that many of them are prosperous cultivators. Massive land alienation[19], unequal distribution of land[20] and increasing dependence on agricultural sector lead the Mog women workers to sell their labour power primarily as agricultural labourers. This process has been accentuated in Tripura after partition despite the promulgation of the Land Transfer Regulations and their implementation. Dispossession of tribals of their lands compel their women to accept the inferior economic status of agricultural workers.

Liquor- making has become the principal occupation for some of the women among the Tripuris and Jamatias and subsidiary occupation for majority of the women among the Tripuris, Riangs and Jamatias. Tribal people have the right to distil liquor in their indigenous process for consumption at home and within the community[21].But at present liquor-brewing by women has become a source of earning for the tribal households and we have found that

some non-tribal youths of plains are involved in collecting this home-brewed liquor from tribal women for illicit trade. However, liquor-making, either for consumption or for sale, is not found to be practised by the Mog women.

Occupational diversification is almost absent among the tribal women of four villages under study. Among the Riangs and Mogs no women is found in service sector.

As stated earlier, agriculture remains the single largest sector of employment for tribal women. But in this sector also the Riang women are lagging behind their sisters of other three groups, in respect of development as majority of the Riang women are engaged in jhum cultivation and other subsistence activities. Again,emergence of wage labour among the Tripuri women and particularly among the Mog women indicates the growing economic differentiation within the same tribal communities.

Occupational Pattern of Tribal and Non-tribal Women

Table-V.4 shows that agriculture provides only 30 per cent of the total employment for non-tribal women whereas it is 91.5 per cent for the tribal women. A good number of non-tribal women are deriving their living from rearing poultry, duckery and from cane-work which are certainly qualitatively better than petty subsistence works and liquor-making done by the tribal women. Two non- tribal women are found in exploitative piece-rate work like bidi-making. Table-V.4 shows that non-tribal women have gained more than tribal women in the service sector.

Unlike tribal women, non- tribal women are engaged mostly in non- agricultural occupations and their occupational structure is diversified to some extent.

Economic Differentiation and Women's Participation in Economic Activities

There was a time when jhuming was universally practised in Tripura [22]. Under this system of cultivation, there is no individual ownership of land by the jhumias but there is some form of communal ownership in the sense that each tribe or sub- tribe has some roughly demarcated areas under control. Since the institution of private property did not exist among the jhumias, economic differentiation based on land ownership must also, by definition, have been non- existent among them[23]. But today's reality is that the tribal societies are no longer egalitarian in nature[24]. Economic differentiations based on land ownership and income are found within a single tribal community and among different tribal communities. An attempt has been made to study whether economic participation of the tribal women varies between different socio-economic strata.

It is observed that in tribal villages land is the principal source of livelihood for majority of the tribal people although some avenues of occupation have opened up for them in recent times. Even though most of the tribal households under our study have taken settled cultivation, only a few of them have become prosperous cultivators because they have not acquired an equal access to land suitable for settled cultivation. Similarly, diversification of agricultural economy, although limited in extent, may also be seen in the employment of tribal men in salaried services. Service in government departments has created a new class among the tribals particularly, among the Tripuris.

However, we have divided tribal households into five

categories according to the size of the land owned by them. According to State Report on Agricultural Census, 1980-81, "A person was considered to be the owner of a piece of land if he had the right of permanent and heritable possession with or without the right to transfer the title"[25]. Again, tribe-wise division of households is made according to the income earned by the households from different sources.

The following tables show the distribution of tribal female workers among different land-owning groups and income groups within the same tribe and among different tribes.

From Table-V.5 it can be observed that among the Tripuris and Mogs, largest proportions of tribal women workers are from households who either donot possess land or possess very little amount of land. Practically, amount of land up to 2.5 kanis is not viable for cultivation. Women of these households among the Tripuris and Mogs participate in work as agricultural labourers. It is because of the fact that, these two tribal groups do not practise jhum any more. Therefore, female labour force of landless households cannot be diverted to jhum cultivation. On the other hand, among the Riangs and Jamatias largest participation in the working force comes from the households who possess a considerable amount of land suitable for wet cultivation. We have noted earlier that the percentage of agricultural labourers is more among the Mogs and the Tripuris. We have also noted that these women, the poorest of the poor, are usually unable to participate in economic activities without being offered a wage-based job. Among the Riangs and also among the Jamatias, poor women of landless households participate

in jhuming and for that reason proportion of agricultural labourers among them is less than that among the Tripuris and the Mogs.

If we have a look at the table, particularly at the number of households in each land-owning group within the same tribal community we find that, except to a very limited extent among the Tripuris, possession of higher amount of land does not refrain women from joining work force. Therefore, it may be said that in our tribal villages possession of land does not have a negative effect on tribal women's participation in economic activities which may generally be observed for high-caste women of India[26].

Now, if we compare the land possession and women's participation between the tribals and non-tribals, it is found that the largest proportion of female workers in the non-tribal society is from land-poor strata. The same pattetrn is observed for the Tripuris and Mogs also. But, the difference is that among the non-tribals, female participation in visible jobs falls with increase in landownership. This indicates a negative correlation between the size of land- ownership and women's economic participation among the non-tribals of Daksin Charilam.

Table-V.6 shows that, among the tribal communities women's economic participation has not decreased with higher levels of income. It can be observed in the table that, among the Riangs 68.0 per cent of total women workers belong to the income group, Rs. 1,000.00- 10,000.00 while it is only 32.0 per cent in the income group, Rs. 10,000.00- 20,000.00. Only 7 households belong to the higher income group and all adult women from these households participate in economic activities. On the

other hand, non-tribal women, as typical of rural Asia are not a homogeneous entity and their work input in the visible jobs fall with relatively increased affluence[27].

For the non-tribals, it is the economic compulsion, more than any other consideration, which motivates women in rural areas to seek employment for wages. It is, therefore, but natural that such women are drawn from poorer strata of the rural society comprising mostly landless and low-income group households. But for the tribals,it is the socio-cultural background which motivates women in the rural tribal society to participate in economic activities although very few exceptions are there.

Level of Literacy and Economic Participation

Literacy influences the pattern of economic participation as it enables the workers to move from the primary sector to the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. In our tribal villages it is observed that women's participation in economic activities is not positively correlated with literacy because the main avenue of employment is unskilled labour in agriculture. The relation between the level of literacy and women's participation in economic activities is shown in Table-V.7.

The fact that emanates from the table is that, the increasing access to education, makes women's participation in economic activities lower. This indicates that educated tribal women do not participate in agricultural activities in the rural areas. Among the Riangs 94 per cent of the total women workers are illiterate. Almost the same picture is revealed for the Jamatia and the Mog women. The position is slightly better among the

Tripuris.

Although there is no consistent relation between the level of literacy and the extent of participation in the active economic life, it seems that there is an indication of negative relation between the level of literacy and extent of participation in economic activities.[28] Of course, literacy levels are likely to become important determinant at higher levels of development in a tribal society.

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Table - V. 1
Occupational pattern of Tribal men and Women in Four Selected Villages

Village and Tribe	Herma Tripuri				Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para Riang		
	Male		Female		Male		Female
Principal P. C. to	No of	P. C. to	No of	P. C. To	No. of	P. C. to	No. of
Occupation Total workers	Workes	Total Workers	Workers	Total Workers	Workers	Total Workers	Workers
I. Wet Cultivation 46.0	18	27.7	29	53.70	30	55.56	23
II. Jhum Cultivation 44.0	-	-	-	-	17	31.48	22
III. Agricultural/ Wage labour 6.0	12	18.46	17	31.5	5	9.26	3
IV. Cattle rearing/ Poultry/Duckery -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
V. Household industry -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VI. Liquor making -	-	-	3	5.55	-	-	-
VII. Other subsistence Work	-	-	3	5.55	-	-	2

Table - V. 1 (Contd.)
Occupational pattern of Tribal men and Women in Four Selected Villages

Village and Tribe	Natun Dewanbari Jamatia				Mahamuni Mog Riang			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
Principal Occupation	No of Workes	P. C. to Total Workers	No of Workers	P. C. To Total Workers	No. of Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	No. of Workers	P. C. to Total workers
I. Wet Cultivation	31	59.62	35	62.5	30	56.60	22	55.0
II. Jhum Cultivation	2	3.84	5	8.93	-	-	-	-
III. Agricultural/ Wage labour	8	15.38	11	19.65	15	28.30	16	40.0
IV. Cattle rearing/ Poultry/Duckery	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
V. Household industry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VI. Liquor making	-	-	3	5.35	-	-	-	-
VII. Other subsistence Work	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VIII. Other non-agri-cultural Work	7	13.46	-	-	3	5.66	2	5.0
IX. Petty business		-	-	-	1	1.89	-	-
X. Service	4	7.7	2	3.57	4	7.55	-	-
Total	52	100.00	56	100.00	53	100.00	40	100.00

Source : Field Survey

Table - V. 2

Number of Tribal Males and Females Participating in some of the Subsidiary Occupations in Selected Tribal Villages

Village and Tribe	Herma		Binoy Prasad Choudhury para		Natun Dewanbari		Mahamuni	
Subsidiary	Tripuri		Riang		Jamatia		Mog	
Occupation	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Wet cultivation	10	8	5	7	9	8	18	17
Jhum cultivation	-	-	39	31	26	35	-	-
Rabi cropping	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	22
Agricultural labour	3	3	3	-	16	16	8	-
Weaving	-	22	-	33	-	36	-	21
Liquor making	-	31	-	22	-	31	-	-

Source : Field Survey

Table - V. 3

Occupational Pattern of Women Workers Among Four Tribes Under Study (Principal Occupations only)

	Tripuri		Riang		Jamatia		Mog	
Principal Occupation	No of Workes	P. C. to Total Workers	No of Workers	P. C. To Total Workers	No. of Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	No. of Workers	P. C. to Total workers
I. Wet Cultivation	29	53.70	23	46.0	35	62.5	22	55.0
II. Jhum Cultivation	-	-	22	44.0	5	8.93	-	-
III. Agricultural/ Wage labour	17	31.15	3	6.0	11	`19.65	16	40.0
IV. Cattle rearing/ Poultry/Duckery	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
V. Household industry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VI. Liquor making	3	5.55	-	-	3	5.35	-	-
VII. Other subsistence Work	3	5.55	2	4.0	-	-	-	-
VIII. Other non-agri-cultural Work	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5.0
IX. Petty business	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
X. Service	2	3.70	-	-	2	3.57	-	-
Total	54	100.00	50	100.00	56	100.00	40	100.00

Source : Field Survey

Table-V. 4

Occupational Pattern of Tribal and Non-tribal Women of Five Selected Villages

	Tribal (Four tribal groups clubbed together)		Non-Tribal	
Primary Occupation	No. of Women Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	No. of Women Workers	P. C. to Women Workers
I. Wet Cultivation	109	54.5	5	25.0
II. Jhum cultivation	27	13.5	-	-
III. Agricultural/Wage labour	47	23.5	1	5.0
IV. Cattle-rearing/ Poultry/Duckery	-	-	8	40.0
V. Household industry	-	-	2	10.0
VI. Liquor making	6	3.0	-	-
VII. Other subsistence Work	5	2.5	-	-
VIII. Other non-agricultural Work	2	1.0	2	10.0
IX. Petty business	-	-	-	-
X. Service	4	2.0	2	10.0
Total	200	100.0	20	100.0

Table - V. 5

Percentage Distribution of Tribal Women Workers Among Different Land-owing Groups in Four Tribal Villages

Village	Herma			Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para			Natun Dewanbari		
Tribe	Tripuri			Riang			Jamatia		
Size of land (in kani)*	No of Households	No. of Women Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	No. of Households	No. of Women Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	No. of Households	No. of Women Workers	P. C. to Total Workers
0-2.5	22	23	42.60	13	16	32.0	16	18	32.14
2.5-5	11	13	24.07	3	3	6.0	5	5	8.93
5-10	15	17	31.48	12	20	40.0	14	20	35.71
10-15	2	1	1.85	4	10	20.0	5	8	14.29
15 +	-	-	-	1	1	2.0	2	5	8.93
Total	50	54	100.00	33	50	100.00	42	56	100.00

* 2.5 Kani = 1 acre approximately

Table - V. 5

Village	Mahamuni			Daksin Charilam Madhyapara		
Tribe	Mog			Non-Tribal		
Size of land (in kani)*	No of Households	No. of Women Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	No. of Household	No. of Women Workers	P. C. to Total Workers
0-2.5	15	15	37.5	32	14	70.0
2.5-5	5	6	15.0	6	4	20.0
5-10	6	11	27.5	2	2	10.0
10-15	1	3	7.5	-	-	-
15 +	2	5	12.5	-	-	-
Total	29	40	100.00	40	20	100.00

Soruce : Field Survey

* 2.5 Kani = 1 acre approximately

Table - V. 6

Percentage Distribution of Tribal Women Workers Among Different Income Groups in Four Tribal Villages income Under study

Village	Herma			Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para			Natun Dewanbari		
Tribe	Tripuri			Riang			Jamatia		
Income Group (in Rupees)	No of Households	No. of Women Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	No. of Households	No. of Women Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	No. of Households	No. of Women Workers	P. C. to Total Workers
1,000.00-10,000.00	16	22	40.74	26	34	68.0	33	41	73.22
10,000.00-20,000.00	10	11	20.38	7	16	32.0	4	7	12.5
20,000.00-50,000.00	20	18	33.33	-	-	-	5	8	14.28
50,000.00 +	4	3	5.55	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	50	54	100.00	33	50	100.00	42	56	100.00

(Contd.)

Table - V. 6 (contd.)

Village		Mahamuni			Daksin Charilam	
Tribe		Mog			Non-Tribal	
Income Group (in Rupees)	No. of Households	No. of Women Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	No. of Households	No. of Women Workers	P. C. to Total Workers
1,000.00-10,000.00	24	33	82.5	20	11	55.0
10,000.00-20,000.00	1	1	2.5	6	4	20.0
20,000.00-50,000.00	3	3	7.5	10	3	15.0
50,000.00 +	1	3	7.5	4	2	10.00
Total	29	40	100.00	40	20	100.00

Soruce : Field Survey

Table-V. 7

Literacy Level and Women's Participation in Economic Activities in the Villages Under Study

Village and Tribe	Herma Tripuri		Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para Riang		Natun Dewanbari Jamatia	
Level of Literacy and Education	Number of Women Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	Number of Women Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	Number of Women Workers	P. C. to Total Workers
Illiterate	26	48.15	47	94.0	46	82.14
Primary	17	31.48	3	6.0	5	8.98
Class IV-VIII	8	14.81	-	-	2	3.57
S. F. Level	3	5.56	-	-	3	5.36
H. S. level	-	-	-	-	-	-
B. A.	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	54	100.00	50	100.00	56	100.00

(Contd.)

Table-V. 7 (Contd.)

Village and Tribe	Mahamuni		Daksin Charilam Madhyapara	
	Mog		Non-Tribal	
Level of Literacy and Education	Number of Women Workers	P. C. to Total Workers	Number of Women Workers	P. C. to Total Workers
Illiterate	32	80.0	6	30.0
Primary	4	10.0	4	20.0
Class IV-VIII	3	7.5	6	30.0
S. F. Level	-	-	2	10.0
H. S. level	1	2.5	1	5.0
B. A.	-	-	1	5.0
Total	40	100.00	20	100.00

Source : Field Survey

Chapter - VI

THE RELATIVE POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE TRIBAL SOCIETIES OF TRIPURA

(As Revealed From the Field Study)

It is well-known that economic participation and economic status go together. For it is through participation in productive activities that one can earn income and may have access to commodities that contribute to one's welfare. What is less obvious is the relation between economic participation and social status. The question thus arises as to how the relative position of women in the tribal society of Tripura has its relevance in a study that focuses its primary attention on economic participation.

In answering the question posed above, we may point out that a two-way relation may be envisaged between economic participation and social status. The position of an individual or a group in the social set up largely determines the opportunities of economic participation. For example, taboos may prevent women from participating in particular types of activities[1]. Attitude towards the female child may determine the scope of its education and training and thus its future in work participation. So, social status of women in any society is bound to be reflected in the nature and extent of their economic participation.

Secondly, economic participation may also contribute to social status. Involvement of women in income-earning process may enhance their prestige in the eyes of men and thus strengthen their position both at home and outside[2]

So an examination of the societal status of women along with perusal of their economic participation will enable us to understand the interaction between the two.

It is with the objective related in the foregoing paragraph that we propose to deal with the question of relative position of women in the tribal societies of Tripura with the help of a few indicators.

The position of women in tribal societies can be analysed by describing their condition or state, social standing in the family and community and comparing these indicators with respect to tribal women with those of other groups in tribal and non-tribal societies.

A commonly held view among some social scientists is that women in tribal societies enjoy a higher position than their non-tribal counterparts or even their own menfolk because of the leading role they play in production[3]. As evidence of this phenomenon is cited the fact that among other things, in many tribal societies, a woman can own property[4] and has bride-price paid for her[5]. She also enjoys considerable sexual freedom and freedom in the choice of her husband[6].

But is this the whole picture ? Is the elevated status of women in tribal societies a myth rather than the reality ? From our field study it would be evident that such generalisations are not tenable in all cases. The position in respect of indicators of social status like right to own or control land, involvement in decision-making, literacy rate, prevalence of bride-price, male-female wage rate which have been tested through household schedules in our selected villages may unfold the real picture.

Land ownership

If we take land ownership as the parameter of social position, we find in our selected villages that very few women are the owners of landed property. The following data in regard to women's ownership of landed property speak for themselves :

Table - VI. 1

Village	Group	Percentage men possesing land in surv-eyed villages	Percentage of of women possessing land in surveyed villages
Herma	Tripuri	39.68	13.04
Binoy Prasad Choudhury Para Natun	Riang	33.67	3.19
Dewabbari	Jamatia	34.14	18.18
Mahamuni Daksin Charilam	Mog	29.0	3.07
Madhyapara	Non-tribal	30.76	5.77

Source : Village Survey

It is found that positions of the Riang and Mog women are inferior to that of even their non-tribal counterparts in respect of land ownership. Although the condition of Tripuri and Jamatia respondents is slightly better in this regard, their peripheral position vis-a-vis their menfolk is clearly reflected in the data. Land being the strategic factor of production in the agricultural economy and the most important symbol of prestige in the rural society, it

cannot be gainsaid that tribal women's extremely meagre legal entitlement to this resource points up their inferior position in the society. It is obvious that families that have more power and influence in the villages are invariably those who have acquired more land than others. It is likely that when land is vested in the hands of individual men, women are kept out of the decision-making process at the community level.

One important factor responsible for landlessness of tribal women workers is the gender-bias found in the customary law of inheritance prevalent in the tribal societies of Tripura. Even today, a good number of customary laws and tradition continue to be prevalent in tribal societies of Tripura. Not only in Tripura, but also tribal communities of other North-Eastern states continue to be governed by uncodified customary law under which, among patrilineal tribes, women's rights in land are severely circumscribed and typically limited to usufruct[7]. The law of inheritance is one such customary law having gender-bias. As descent is patrilineal, custom provides that sons, to the exclusions of daughters, will inherit paternal property[8]. We may contrast this situation with law of inheritance applicable to the non-tribal Hindu societies of Tripura where sons and daughters equally share the paternal property amongst themselves. This discriminatory custom in regard to inheritance prevalent in the tribal society is enough to explode the myth of superior social status of tribal women vis-a-vis the tribal menfolk and non-tribal counterparts.

Absence of ownership of land on the part of the head of the female-headed household is also an indicator of poverty of that household. In our surveyed villages we have found

2 female-headed households among the Tripuris, 2 among the Jamatias, 1 among the Mogs and 4 among the non-tribals. All these five female-headed households among the tribal communities of three villages belong to land-poor resourceless lower income strata. No female-headed household is found among the Riangs. Among the non-tribals also, out of four female-headed households three belong to landless lower income group of their society. There are significant number of households throughout India which lack adult males, and where one or more females have to support themselves as well as young children and infirm elders[9]. The tribal and non-tribal women of female-headed households of our selected villages are victims of discrimination both subtle and overt. General social attitude towards these women as well as the actual lack of partner to share responsibility and economic burdens make their position more onerous. The incidence of witch hunting in tribal areas can be seen as attempts by the relatives of a tribal woman to dispose of her claim to her husband's property after his demise.

Decision-making

The question relating to tribal women's share in decision-making may be considered at two levels : one at the community level and the other at the family level. It is found from our discussion with the people in the surveyed villages that at the family level the tribal women share equally with tribal men the power in respect of decision making regarding sale and purchase of land, borrowing and lending of money, education of children etc.[10] But tribal women are least involved in the decision - making process at the community level[11]. The exclusion of women from the process of decision-making at the community

level speaks of a marked male-bias in the ethos of the tribal society of Tripura. This is bound to have negative impact on the status of women at the family or household level too. Let us imagine a case of male-female dispute[12]. (*e. g.* a case of alleged atrocity on wife perpetuated by husband). In this case, the absence or meagre representation of women in traditional or custom-based village council will have an unfavourable implication for women. Moreover, women's point of view is likely to be ignored in all decisions that may affect common interest.

However, the observation is applicable obly to traditional tribal institutions and not to recent socio-political institution like TTAADC and its allied bodies where the principle of 33.33 per cent reservation for women representatives is followed.

Literaacy

Literacy is considered to be a very important index of human development. This is more so for a backward tribal society where literacy rate is likely to dictate the rate of modernisation and development. In particular the ability to participate in the non-agricultural occupations specially in the service sector depends on the level of education and literacy is the primary prerequisite for this. Where both tribal men and women have taken to non-agricultural occupation, tribal women are generally at a disadvantage compared to their male counterparts because of their low educational attainments and low level of skill.

Unfortunately, it is found that in respect of literacy and education, women in general and tribal women in particular, hold an inferior position in Tripura. Our survey of tribal and non-tribal households shows that literacy

rate of men is spectacularly higher than that of women. This is evident from the following table. (Table -vi.2)

Taking tribe- wise literacy rates, the Riang women with 18.08 per cent are at the bottom while the Tripuri women with 36.95 per cent are at the top. There are sharp differences between tribal men and women and tribal women and non-tribal women in respect of literacy. In tribal villages girls attend school in smaller number and for shorter periods than boys. We have noted earlier in chapter IV that a girl of school going age has to help her mother in work both inside and outside the home. The early age in starting work in fields has affected the schooling prospects of a girl. The relative position of tribal women in this respect is inferior to tribal men and their non-tribal sisters. The wide gap between the male and female literacy rates indicate a gender - bias in a household's attention to the education of the children. This gender-bias seriously limits the scope of future development of the female child in the tribal society as well.

Bride-price

The prevalence of bride- price is considered to be an indicator of the higher social staus of tribal women vis-a-vis tribal men and their non-tribal counterparts. Among most of the tribes of Tripura[13] as well as India[14], customary payments are required to be made by the bridegroom to the bride's parents during marriage. The nature and extent of participation of women in economic activities are supposed to play a crucial role in this matter.

Our field survey shows that the custom of paying bride-price for acquiring a bride prevails among cent per cent of Riang households, 85 per cent of the Mog and only 18 per

cent of the Tripuri households. But among the Jamatias and to a large extent among the Tripuris, it is dowry, rather than bride- price which prevails today although the rate of economic participation of the Jamatia women is higher than that of their male counterparts in the surveyed village. It is possible that the penetration of male - dominated Hindu culture in tribal areas along with the change in their economy has made the tribal women lose their former status .

Types of work

The type of work that is generally assigned to women in family farms is also an indicator of their social status. In the chapter on economic participation we have observed that women are given the most unpleasant, time- taking and laborious jobs connected with family farming.

Wage Rate

For India as a whole for each of the agricultural operation the male wage rate is considerably higher than the female one[15]. The evidences of wage discrimination between men and women workers in the hills and plains of Tripura can be found from the past records and documents[16]. This discriminatory attitude continues till today in Tripura. A study of recent time on the Mogs of South Tripura District observes a discriminatory wage rate among male and female agricultural labourers[17].

In the villages under our study, the age-old practice of paying lower wages to the women workers has been continuing. One of the reasons why landowners prefer famale to male agricultural labourers is that their wages are lower. Both tribal and non-tribal women receive lower

wages for any kind of work they do; they are also paid less for the same work they do along with men. Wage differentials are existing not only between men and women, but also between women and between villages. Younger tribal females from landless households participate in transplanting and weeding operations as hired labourers at lower wages than adult females.We have met a Tripuri girl student of Class -IX, in village Herma, working with her mother in transplantation. Her wage is Rs.15.00 while her mother gets Rs.20.00 for the same hours of work. This girl belongs to a landless household. She participates in work as she has to purchase her text books for which her parent is not capable of. Wage differential exists not only between men and women or between adult and younger women, but also between villages.

Table-VI.3 presents the details on average daily wage rates in five selected villages.

In our villages usually both male and female labourers receive their wages in cash. Poor landless female agricultural labourers have to accept this existing discriminatory wage system because their preference for a wage- based job is very strong as the alternative means 'no - work ' for these women.

In the selected villages it is found that tribal female agricultural labourers are preferred by the non-tribal land - owners of adjacent villages not only for lower wages, but also for their sincere and efficient performance in the agricultural fields. Sincerity is more a virtue of women because household activities and child care always demand sincerity and carefulness from women. But the

irony is that,their sincerity is not rewarded with wage at least equal to men. It is not that, non- tribal land- owners pay lower wages to tribal women or tribal land- owners pay lower wages to non- tribal women, lower wages are paid to all women vis-a-vis men.

In bidi- making, for example, two non-tribal women receive wages from their non-tribal bidi-owner at the rate of Rs.5.00 per thousand pieces of bidi. These women can make 1500 bidi per day at their maximum. Their daily wage thus amounts to Rs.7.50.

Thus there are basic common problems confronted by all the exploited poor men and women belonging both to tribal or non- tribal groups. Women's, particularly tribal women's lack of education and skill and the absence of unionisation among them make them particularly vulnerable among the exploited. It is surprising that wage differentials have gone unquestioned. The agricultural labour organisations supported by different political parties have not yet taken steps against such wage discrimination in our sample villages.

Our survey also reveals that high rate of economic participation does not guarantee higher social status for women. Here the non-economic factors are often more predominant than the economic factor in determining the social status of the individuals concerned.

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12. Note : Women's Commission of Tripura has received eight cases of disputes between husband and wife from tribal women of different parts of Tripura during the period February 1993 to December 1994. Among these cases atrocities on tribal women for dowry by tribal men is also there.

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Chapter VII

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

(1)

Many studies on tribal societies of the country as well as State and Census data show that tribal women, particularly rural women play a very significant role in their economy. This fact induces the researcher to observe the contribution of tribal women to their home and society in Tripura which remains as an untold story even today. It has been our endeavour to know the quantitative and qualitative aspects of economic participation of these hard-working women and throw some light on the unexplored world of tribal women of Tripura.

The tribal economy of Tripura has been undergoing some changes. Traditional jhum cultivation is no longer the mainstay of living although many tribals retain jhuming as a subsidiary occupation. The socio-economic scenario of Tripura is characterised by dualism - there existing a marked difference in economic status, social institution and cultural outlook between the tribal and non-tribal societies or between the hills and plains in Tripura. The demographic and socio-economic marginalisation clearly portray the tribals as a disadvantaged social group in Tripura.

As a background for the analysis of results of our field study, Census data on work participation rate has been examined as it provides time-series analysis on macro-aspects. The facts which emanate from the analysis of Census data are as follows. First, tribal women's work

participation rate is higher than that of their non-tribal counterparts although it appears to be below that of their menfolk. The fact which is of great concern is that work participation rate of tribal women declined over the period 1961 to 1991 while it increased for non-tribal women during the same period. A comparison of work participation rate between the tribal women of seven North-Eastern States shows that work participation rate is lowest for the tribal women of Tripura. A sector-wise distribution of tribal women workers during 1961-91 clearly indicates that even today occupational diversification is almost absent for the tribal women of Tripura and agriculture remains the mainstay of living for them.

Our study on four tribal villages reveals that female work participation rate is much higher than is suggested by the Census figures. In the tribal society of Tripura women's involvement in economic activities is no less important than that of their men. Among the Jamatias women's involvement in economic activities is greater than that of the Jamatia men. Among the women of our four selected tribal groups the rate of economic participation is highest for the Riang women. In tribal communities women devote longer hours of work compared to their men. In many cases jhum cultivation is entirely left to women. Where plough cultivation is the order of the day, tribal women are participating in all operations except ploughing. Like Census study, our village survey also reveals that economic participation of women among the tribal is much higher than that of women among the non-tribals.

Apart from the quantitative aspects of economic participation, qualitative aspects are also examined which

show that very few women among the tribals are engaged in other than agricultural employment and a significant proportion of rural tribal women are working as agricultural labourers.

In the villages under our study, the age-old practice of paying lower wages to the women orkers has been continuing. Wage differentials exist not only between men nd women are working as agricultural labourers.

It is also observed that tribal societies of Tripura are no longer egalitarian in nature. Economic differentiation based on land ownership and income are found within a single tribal community and among different tribal communities. But women's participation in economic activities do not vary significantly with changing levels of income and land ownership among the tribals while among the non-tribals, rural women's work input in visible jobs fall with relatively greater affluence.

The relation between the level of literacy and tribal women's participation in rural economic activities has been found to be negative. This is perhaps because of the fact that the main avenues of employment for them in rural areas is unskilled labour in agriculture and advancement in education induce rural-urban-migration even in tribal societies.

It is widely believed that women in tribal societies enjoy a higher status than their non-tribal counterparts or even their menfolk mainly because of the leading role they play in their economy. As evidence of this phenomenon is cited the fact that among other things in many tribal societies, a woman can own property and command bride-price.

But our study suggests that this is not the whole picture. The elevated status of women in tribal societies is a myth rather than reality. Pro-male customary laws and traditions are still prevalent among the tribal groups under our investigation. As descent is usually patrilineal, the sons alone to the exclusion of daughters, inherit paternal property. In sample villages very few women are the owners of the landed property. Among the Jamatias and to a large extent among the Tripuris, it is dowry rather than bride-price which prevails today although the rate of economic participation of the Jamatia women is higher than that of their male counterparts.

The study based on the survey of four villages inhabited by four distinct tribal communities cannot be used to make generalisations for the whole country. It consitutes a micro-study of tribal women and their economic participation, the implications of which are not without relevance to a wider field.

(2)

From the above analysis of various aspects of economic participation of tribal women in the four selected villages of Tripura, we may come to the conclusion that, women in the tribal society play a very significant role in economic activities. In fact, their involvement is as important as that of men, if not more. Their contribution to household maintenance is very crucial for the survival of their families. But the macro-statistics like those found in Census Volumes do not adequately reflect this reality. They understate the number of women workers in rural areas. A large part of the problem of under-reporting stems from the fact that women are seen primarily as

housewives and mothers, and even when tribal women perform a lot of productive works on their own farms, this is not identified as such. Many other subsistence activities done by the tribal women are not included within the purview of the Census data. In other words, while the number of actual women workers is likely to be quite high in rural areas, the available statistics do not capture all of them. This in turn, is perhaps due to the fact that neither society nor the women themselves perceive their role in society as anything but marginal in the economic sphere.

In the wake of switch-over from shifting cultivation to plough cultivation, the contribution of tribal women to the economy of their society has not declined quantitatively but women are losing their importance in society.

Inspite of tribal women's almost equal participation in economically productive activities even in plough cultivation, they have little control over the family land and other means of production owned by their households. The tribal women have lost the egalitarian access to resources like land with the introduction of individual legal ownership of land which is vested in the hands of the male in general among the tribal societies of Tripura. Moreover, restrictions regarding the use of forests has made their search for fuel a much harder task. The jhum field being distant from dwelling houses take up much of their labour, time and energy.

Usually less educated or illiterate rural tribal women have fewer employment opportunities in the non-agricultural sectors. The female agricultural labourers are also subjected to discriminatory wage rate. Both tribal and non-tribal women workers receive lower wages for

any work they do; they are also paid less for the same work they do along with men. It is striking that this wage differential has gone unquestioned. The agricultural workers organisations supported by political parties remain silent on this issue. This is a clear reflection of a patriarchal bias in the rural society of Tripura. Prevalence of customary laws in rural tribal society does not allow women to inherit paternal property.

Impact of development on different sections of tribal women has not been even. Gains of a small number overshadowed the deprivation and difficulties of the majority. Bulk of the tribal women, the poorest of the poor, belonging to resourceless households are left behind the process of development launched by different departments of the government. For them survival and not growth is the key question guiding their economic activities. Tribal women of lower economic strata suffer twin disadvantages. It appears that impact of growing marginalisation of the tribals in the economy of Tripura has imposed a disproportionately heavy burden on the shoulders of women vis-a-vis men and moreover, women are especially disadvantaged group within each unit of socio-economic stratification.

Generally, the planners and policy makers conceive and execute rural development with the implicit assumption that their impact will be homogeneous on the lives of both males and females. But their presumption of equal sharing of benefits of development by both the sexes is disputable.

(3)

The rural tribal women of Tripura who have been the

target group of the present study constitute a disadvantaged section of the backward tribal society. On the one hand, the women workers under our survey share all the socio-cultural and economic traits of the backward tribal society and on the other, they suffer from all the problems associated with inaccessibility and other problems of rural life. They are less adventaged not only than their non-tribal rural sisters but also in comparison with urban tribal women who have been able to overcome both tribal backwardness and rural disadvantages. Therefore, any programme for the uplift of the social group under discussion would require a multi-pronged approach.

It goes without saying that the condition of the tribal women cannot be improved without a comperhensive development programme for the tribal society as a whole. For, if we regard family to be the smallest social unit for which a programme can be undertaken, we realise that housewife's welfare cannot be augmented in isolation from that of her husband and other members of the family. In short, opportunities must be created for the family as a whole. Even the family cannot be developed without developing the community as a whole because problems of externalities in development are manifest everywhere. Therefore, programme for tribal development in the conventional lines pursued in Tripura must continue even if we want to better the conditions of rural tribal women.

But the need for comprehensive development programme for the tribal society as a whole or for the State of Tripura as a whole or for the entire country as a whole, does not minimise the importance of a specific programme designed for women especially, the tribal women in rural areas. The crippling effects of gender bias against the

hapless tribal women must be remedied through such a programme. Otherwise the planners are bound to commit the falacy of "trickle-down" theory in a new way. As is well-known by now, it was once thought that overall development will also take care of the individuals at the lower strata of the society but it was proved wrong later and special measures for the downtrodden in the form of anti-poverty programme etc. have been launched in India to rectify that mistake. If we again think that measures for tribal welfare will automatically benefit the poorest of the poor in the tribal society, we will be committing the falacy of the "trickle-down" theory once again. For tribals do no longer constitute a homogeneous group. Egalitarian gender treatment in the tribal society is more a myth than a reality. Onslaught of the market economy has affected the women workers more adversely than their male counterparts.

Under the circumstances, nothing short of a specific programme designed to augment opportunities, entitlements and amenities for the tribal women can rescue them from the quagmire of poverty, negligence and discriminating treatment. With the backdrop of discussion in the forgoing paragraph we would like to suggest some ameliorative measures for the tribal women.

First, there should be concerted attempt to rejuvenate the tribal household industry like weaving where women can get opportunity of higher earning. Modernisation of this industry and conversion of loin-looms into handlooms will surely augment the remuneration for labour of women workers at home. This subsistence related industry should also be marketised. This has happened in the case of Manipuri weavers in the N. E. region. There is no reason

why this cannot happen in the case of tribal women of Tripura. Along with weaving other handicrafts like bamboo and cane-craft, sericulture, small scale rubber plantation should also be encouraged so that women can get gainful employment at or near home.

Diversification of agriculture and combining it with horticulture, animal husbandry, poultry etc. can go a long way in bettering the condition of tribal households. In all these development schemes, special assistance should be given to the woman-headed households and to the female workers and entrepreneurs.

A realistic land reform programme is also needed for the betterment of the lot of tribal women. Measures for preventing tribal land alienation can put a check on the conversion of peasant women into agricultural labourers at meagre wages. Allotment of Govt. land should be made jointly in the name of husband and wife in a tribal household so that the wife may have equal share of the Govt. munificence.

If the lot of the large number of unskilled tribal women in the rural areas is to be improved, a massive training programme for them in various crafts is urgent. Tribal women can be trained not only in traditional crafts but also in wool-knitting, tailoring, bee-keeping and a host of processing works. They can be trained as dhais, nurses, Anganwadi workers, family welfare workers etc. with a bit of efforts on the part of the State. This will ensure a smooth transition of these women from tradition to modernity. If entrepreneur development programme is undertaken for the tribals, women may be encouraged and assisted to open small shops etc.

It has been noted that tribal women are facing increasing difficulties in collecting fuel, fodder, small timber and consumable forest products because of the deforestation and increasing restrictions on gathering activities of the tribals in reserve forest areas. To mitigate this problem, social forestry, community gardening etc. should be promoted so that women can get supply of necessary goods with greater ease. Tribal women are also facing acute problem of collecting potable water because of the drying out of natural springs, rivulets etc. following deforestation. Therefore, an urgent and wide-ranging programme for creating sources of potable water in tribal areas must be chalked out and implemented with all sincerity.

Programme of housing for the destitute tribal women should also be undertaken as a supplement to general programme for rural housing.

Eradication of illiteracy has been recognised to be the most important tool of human development. This is more so in the case of tribal women who are physically and psychologically confined to their hamlets in isolation from the rest of the world. All sorts of incentives should be provided to the tribal households for sending their girls to school.

It is well recognised that improvement of any disadvantaged section of a society cannot be made without strong socio-cultural movement. Because many of the barriers to development are socio-cultural in nature. The tribal society will require new values so that their women are able to see the light of progress. The customary laws in the tribal society having gender-bias must be replaced by progressive laws through social movement. Without

this one cannot expect any meaningful uplift of the condition of women in the tribal society.

At the end, we would like to deal with a methodological question. We have observed that contribution of women workers in various unpaid productive activities like collection of fuel, fodder and consumable forest products etc. have been understimated in Census studies of India. This error of underestimation should be rectified and all economically productive activities should be given due recognition.

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